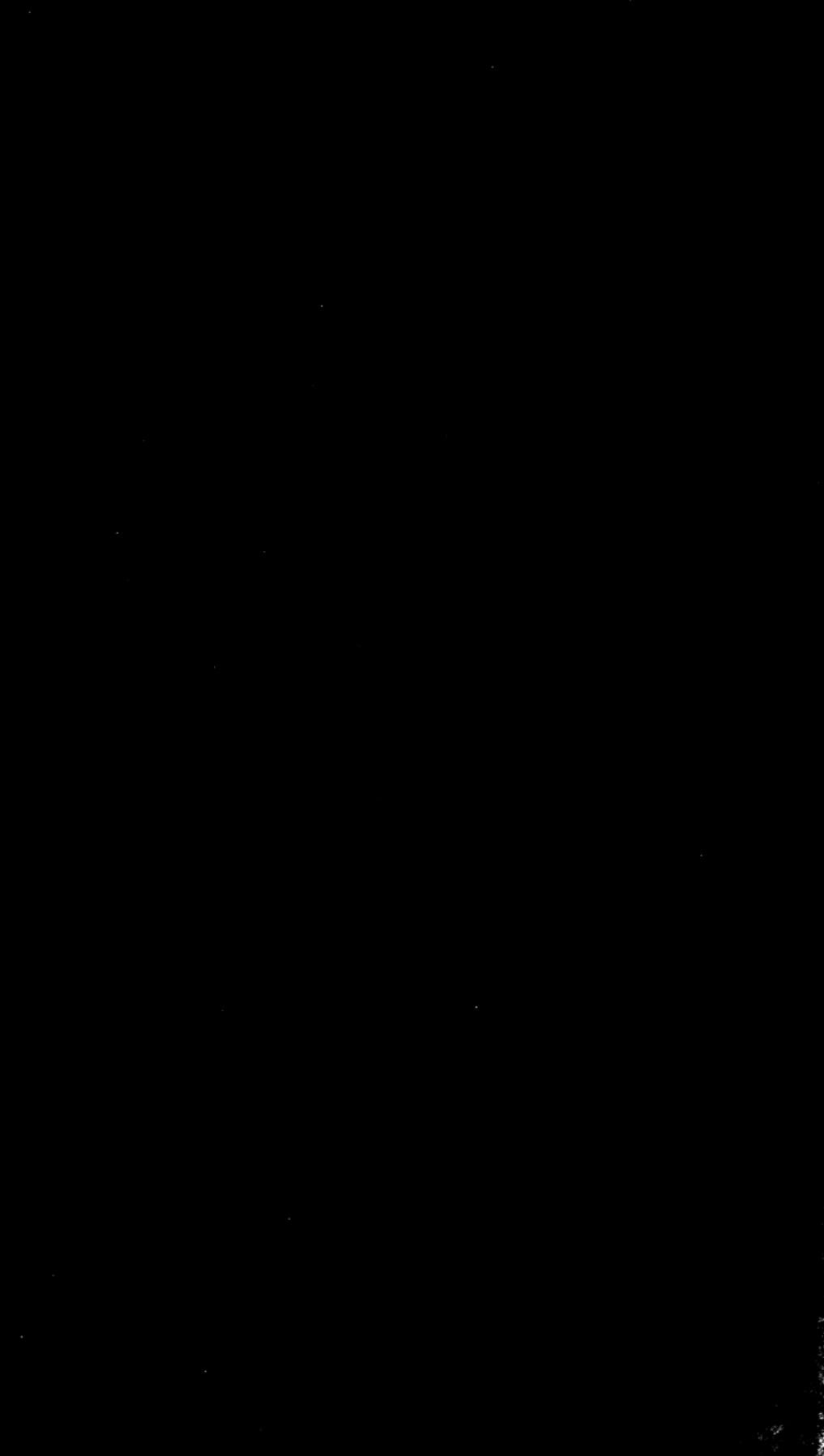


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*EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES.*



# EXPOSITIONS

BY THE

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*AUTHOR OF*

“A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF JOB,” “BALAAM, AN EXPOSITION AND A  
STUDY,” “SALVATOR MUNDI,” ETC., ETC.

*SECOND SERIES*

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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE,  
SCHOLAR, SEER, SAINT,  
WHOSE NAME WILL YET BE HONOURED  
MORE AND MORE.



## PREFACE.

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IN the first Volume of this brief series I made what one of my reviewers called “a sort of half promise” that, if it achieved any fair measure of success, it might be succeeded by other and similar volumes for a few years to come. If half promises are binding, I suppose I am bound to follow up my venture. For the booksellers subscribed for the first large edition of that Volume before it was published ; and in nine months it has run into a third edition. The literary organs of almost every section of the Christian Church—*e.g.*, *The Guardian*, *The Church of England Pulpit*, *The Nonconformist*, *The Freeman*, *The Methodist Magazine*,—joined with such critical journals as *The British Quarterly*, *The Spectator*, *The Academy*, and *The Pall Mall Gazette*, in giving it a hearty welcome, despite its manifold faults and defects. And that, I suppose, may be deemed not only a fair, but a somewhat remarkable, success for a volume of expository sermons.

The title of the work seems to have been the point which most of all perplexed my critics. *The Church of England Pulpit* “does not know” why I did not call my sermons *sermons*, instead of *expositions*. *The Literary*

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*World* suspects—as it well may, since the subsidiary title of the volume was “*Expository Discourses*”—that my expositions are sermons under another name, and even that “they have been actually preached.” While *The Rock* positively invents an ingenious and flattering theory to account for the mysterious fact. “At first we were puzzled to know why Dr. Cox did not call his sermons so: why should he call them expositions? We think we have discovered the reason. There is amongst sermons a strong family likeness, a painful similarity, so that like the dreary rows of new houses which spring up in the second-best quarters of a large town, you can hardly tell one from another. We do not mean that the matter of all published sermons is exactly alike. Far from it; but preachers still think (although happily they are better than they used to be) that their sermons must follow what the lawyers call a common-form. . . . Now it is clear to us that the reason why Dr. Cox calls his sermons ‘*Expositions*’ is that he may at once tell everybody that they have no commonplace likeness to the commonplace family. And, certainly, whether we like the sermons or not, at least we must grant that they are not commonplace.”

I am afraid I cannot plead guilty to the soft impeachment, though I should like to gratify a writer so ingenious. For I certainly had no intention either of contemning the labours of my brethren, or of in any way exalting myself above them. The simple fact is that these sermons were called “*Expositions*” mainly because they *were* expositions or “*expository discourses*,” because in each of them there is a sincere attempt to throw some light on the scripture with which it pro-

fesses to deal. At the same time I wished, by the very title of the book, both to connect the present enterprise with my past work, and to prepare the way for more formal expositions when I should be at leisure to do a little work of that kind. My chief aim for the last thirty years has been to supply a want of which I was keenly conscious long before I became a minister of the Word, *viz.*, to help the unlearned in their endeavours to read and understand that Word. All my books, without exception, and whatever the form they have taken, have been written with this end in view, as were also all my contributions to *The Expositor*. And, naturally, I have given the results of my studies and labours, first of all, to my own Congregation. I have published no book—not even the commentaries on *Job*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Ruth*, *Joel*, *Habakkuk*, *Zephaniah*, *Haggai*, *Malachi*, I doubt whether I have written a single article, which I did not first preach from my own pulpit, or deliver as a series of lectures to my Bible Class. So that my astute critics are quite accurate in conjecturing that these “expositions” were sermons, and sermons that have been “actually preached,” and are only mistaken in assuming that there was any attempt to disguise the fact, or any intention to brand other men’s sermons as “commonplace.”

And in this second Volume I have pursued the same plan as in the first. It is composed of expository discourses in which I have tried to throw what light I could on obscure, out of the way, or difficult Scriptures, *e.g.*, those treated of in *Sentiment and Sentimentalism*, *The Secret of Jonah*, *Friend, go up Higher*, *The Wineskin in the Smoke*, *Baruch* and *Baruch’s Book*; or on well-

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known and important scriptures which have hardly secured the attention they deserve, as in the series on *The Gospel to the Greeks*: while in *The Transfer of the Religious Unit*, *The Psalm of Hezekiah*, and the three lectures on *The New Version of the Old Testament*, I hope I have directed attention to larger tracts of Scripture than are commonly handled in the pulpit, and even to the structure of Holy Writ and to some of the leading principles on which it is based.

Nor do I see why the title “expositions” should be limited to a single literary form, that of commentaries, or why “commentaries” should be written on an uniform plan. Commentaries may be, and when they break away from the scholastic form, often are, at least “as interesting as a novel”; and surely any form of literature, even the sermonic, is an exposition if it bring out—as, for example, Mr. Dale’s prize poem on *The Dream of Jacob* does in the most admirable way—the true significance of any passage of Holy Writ, and even a good exposition if it bring it out in a vital and telling way.

Above all, I must protest against the assumption that any writing ceases to be an exposition if it deals with the ethical and spiritual teaching of the Bible in a devout or hortatory spirit; if, instead of being content with grammatical, critical, and historical exegesis, it ventures on the more vital and precious elements of Holy Scripture, gives its main attention to these, and seeks to draw the reason and heart of men into a happy accord with them. “All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, *in righteousness*;” and to omit its moral elements, its spiritual power, its applications to human life and duty,

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or even to treat them as if they were of comparatively slight account, is, in my judgment, the most fatal mistake into which an expositor can fall, since it is to neglect the *main* uses of the Word. And if there be little or nothing, in the following discourses to move and purify the heart, to quicken in it responses of love obedience, and devotion, I have utterly missed the mark which I have set before me, and which, as I believe, should be the supreme aim of every student and teacher of Scripture.

I need only add, I think, a word or two of explanation, or, if that be necessary, apology, for the numerous references to my own past work in the three lectures on *The New Version of the Old Testament*. Any of my brethren who have taken it in hand to speak on that theme from the pulpit must know how difficult it is to bring so large and critical a subject, a subject, moreover, to which most Congregations have paid little attention, home to the minds of their hearers. I had only one advantage on my side, and felt bound to avail myself of it. I could appeal to many illustrations with which my hearers were already familiar: and, for their sakes, I used these illustrations rather than others. Hence, to strangers, I may often seem to be vindicating my own renderings when I am really bent, rather, on appealing to facts with which the members of my Congregation were acquainted. Not, I dare say, that I was altogether insensible to the pleasure of vindicating myself. Those who have recently entered the ministry of the Church can have but little conception of the risk at which any man, some twenty or thirty years ago, ventured "to tamper" with our Authorized Version, or the odium to

which it often exposed him. Out of my personal experience I could amuse them for an hour with the odd and ignorant criticisms and censures which were launched at the head of any man who then ventured to correct that Version, and, even by implication, to suggest its defects, whether in his sermons or in reading the lessons for the day. And to us who incurred those censures, in order that, like the coadjutors of Ezra, we might "read in the book distinctly, *and give the sense*, and cause (the people) to understand the reading," it could not fail to be an immense satisfaction when we found many of our suggestions adopted and confirmed by the Revised Version. My lectures on that Version were written only a month after it appeared ; they are necessarily inadequate therefore, in the sense that they only touch a vast surface at a few points : but so far as they go, I am thankful to say that, in revising them for the press, I have found nothing in them which I was able to correct.

May the Lord and Giver of all truth deign to accept this imperfect offering, and to bless it to the use and service of his children.

NOTTINGHAM,  
*January 24, 1886.*

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I.

*THE TRANSFER OF THE RELIGIOUS UNIT.*

“I will take you one of a city, and two of a clan, and I will bring you to Zion.”—JEREMIAH iii. 14.

“Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.”—EZEKIEL xiv. 14.

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God.”—EZEKIEL xviii. 30.

THERE was little individualism, among the primitive races, in the earlier stages of human life. The community was everything ; the man almost nothing, save as a member of the community. As the descendants of any remarkable man, any independent and ruling spirit, multiplied—however numerous they grew, they still hung together, held themselves to be members of one family, and had all things common. They were friends and kinsmen ; as many as were of a different strain were “enemies,” or “strangers” who might easily become enemies. The tribe, in short, was the political unit, not the individual man. Their property belonged to the tribe, not to its individual members. Whatever any of them acquired, whether by toil, plunder, or war, was thrown

into the common stock. Whatever crime any one of them committed, whether against property or life, the whole tribe was responsible for it : they might deal with the offender as they thought well—punish, exonerate, or reward him as they pleased ; but they had to pay the full penalty of his crime, or take the consequences of refusing to pay it. Their very ruler was the head of the family, the chief of the clan, rather than an official governor, a kinsman rather than a magistrate. If, because he devoted his time and energies to their service in peace and war, they tilled his fields for him, erected or adorned his rude palace, enriched him with their offerings, any one of them, on the other hand, might eat at his table, or depend on his bounty in sickness, in penury, in want : —just as little more than a century ago many a proud but poor Highland clansman “sorned” on his chief ; just as to-day in many rude tribes—the Malays, for example —the starving peasant or fisherman hangs about the “compound” of his “sultan” and claims a seat at his board.

This tribal unity and responsibility obtained not only in the East, but also in the West. It was a recognized form of social and political life among our own English forefathers : and among the Celts, at least in Scotland and Ireland, it lingered so long, until so recently, as to leave behind it many disastrous effects with which we have to struggle to-day. When the chiefs of the clans became feudal lords, and when lands which once belonged to the whole tribe were appropriated to the sole use of the lord, the impoverished and dispossessed clans-

men were angered, if not ruined ; and we still hear some echoes of the wrong inflicted upon them in the Crofter and Deerforest agitations of Scotland and in the Irish refusals to pay rent.

It was only as men multiplied until “a little one became a thousand, and a small one a strong nation ;” it was only where family so commingled with family and race with race that their several clan ties were ruptured, that the political unit was transferred from the tribe to the individual man. Individual freedom and individual responsibility grew up precisely where men were most numerous, where they were so numerous and so blended that the old narrow tribal relation had to give place to the larger unity of the nation or the race. For as the relations of any community of men grow larger, they of necessity grow looser. A whole nation, a whole race, can hardly be held responsible for all the acts of every one of its members, for in a community so large it cannot pretend to watch and control every act ; and thus room was made for that personal liberty on which we pride ourselves, and that personal accountability which in some measure checks and restrains it.

Now this transfer of the political unit was accompanied —or, rather, as I believe, was preceded and in large measure effected—by a corresponding transfer of the religious unit. No one will deny the immense stress which the Gospel of Christ places on man’s personal responsibility, his individual accountability to God. Its main and constant appeal is to the individual conscience. Its salvation is a salvation of the individual soul. Its warn-

ing is, "Every man must give account of *himself* unto God." And as the great change in the framework of human society has taken place in the *Christian* world and is for the most part confined to the races which have accepted the Christian faith, or the civilization which is penetrated and saturated with that Faith, it is only reasonable to infer that it is the religious idea of personal responsibility to which mainly we must attribute the political change.

But if we may reasonably conclude that we owe that sense of personal freedom and personal accountability which plays so large a part in modern life mainly to the Gospel of Christ, the *history* of this religious idea, of its inception and development, must have a very special interest for us ; and not merely a scientific, but a practical interest : for this is an idea which touches our life at many points, and does much both to mould and to inspire it.

Now there can be no doubt that, in the earlier revelations of the Will of God, the appeal was made to the tribal rather than to the individual conscience. Every student of the Old Testament is struck with the fact that, at least from the time of Moses to that of Isaiah, God does not, as a rule, deal with men one by one, but in groups, in families, in tribes. It is not the Jew personally, but the Jews collectively, to whom He addresses his commandments, his promises and rewards, his warnings and threats. The prophets perpetually use such collective titles as "sons of Abraham," "sons of Jacob," "children of Israel," or such personifications as "Joseph,"

“Ephraim,” “Zion,” or “Jerusalem.” It is the whole tribe or race which is to be saved and blessed. It is the whole tribe or race which is to be punished when it sins, redeemed when it turns and repents. Even in their psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, when, if ever, we should expect to hear the utterances of personal faith and desire, it is commonly the collective faith which finds expression, and the common salvation which is implored or looked for. No doubt some of the leading spirits of Israel anticipated the new revelation, entered into personal relations with their Maker, and cherished a personal hope of his salvation. But great men are usually before their time. And, as a rule, no Hebrew dissociated himself from his fellows even in his most spiritual hours, or sought anything for himself which he did not seek for all. And, doubtless, it was because they expected a common punishment or reward, instead of a personal retribution, that they framed only the haziest conceptions of the life to come ; and, while hoping for their reward mainly in the present life, conceived of it as for the most part an outward and material reward—as a land that flowed with milk and honey, a city within which they might dwell happy and secure. Material bounties men may share in common ; but spiritual gifts—as faith, holiness, purity, love—are by their very nature a personal possession.

I need not detain you with proofs of a fact so patent that commentators of every school are struck with it and many of them not a little perplexed by it ; a fact, too, which your own reading and recollection will con-

firm. Let me, rather, remind you that the first symptom of the approaching change is to be found in that doctrine of *the Remnant* which receives its most memorable and magnificent development in the writings of Isaiah. By his time the prophets had learned that all were not Israel who were of Israel, that all who were of the blood of Abraham were not of his spirit, that only those who shared his faith were the true heirs of his promise. Yet even this faithful Remnant, even these true descendants of the father of the faithful, found it hard, if not impossible, to separate themselves from their unelect brethren. In their wonderful and pathetic Prayer<sup>1</sup> (recorded in Isaiah lxiv.), these very men, whom God acknowledges to be true and loyal to Him, confess the sins of their brethren after the flesh as if *they* were responsible for them, as if they themselves had committed them, and had no claim on the compassion of God which their neighbours did not possess. "We, *all of us*," they say, "are as one unclean; we, *all of us*, do fade as a leaf; we, *all of us*, are the work of thy hands: we are, *all of us*, thy people." And even the prophets who had wrought out this doctrine of the Remnant, and who had therefore broken from the tribal conception, nevertheless proceed to treat this Remnant *as a whole*. Even they do not speak to the individual but to the collective conscience. The thought of a personal salvation and a personal responsibility has not risen, or has not fully risen, on their minds.

It is not, in short, until we come down to Jeremiah

<sup>1</sup> See Discourse on *The Prayer of the Remnant*, Volume I.

that the religious unit is transferred from the community to the individual. It is not even till we come down to Ezekiel that this conception is clearly wrought out, and the seed of Abraham are taught that every man must answer for his own sins and work out his own salvation.

Even by Jeremiah this momentous change is rather hinted at than fully disclosed ; though it is he who gives the germ which Ezekiel afterwards develops. And the first of the three sentences which I have combined in my text (Jer. iii. 14) is the first hint of it to be found in his writings. Here, while rebuking the Israelites for their infidelity to their spiritual Lord and Husband, he does not, as the earlier prophets do, foretell an universal redemption if they return and repent. The promise he brings them is more limited, more individualizing : "I will take you *one of a city, and two of a clan* ;<sup>1</sup> and I will bring you to Zion." A principle of selection is to take the place of that principle of comprehension to which they had been accustomed. God would deal with them one by one, according to their several deserts.

If this passage stood alone, we might conclude that Jeremiah had not advanced beyond Isaiah's doctrine of

<sup>1</sup> A city holds many families. But, confessedly, the second word used by the Prophet is the larger of the two. We cannot retain the word "family," therefore, without necessitating the explanation that the word is here used in a peculiar and antiquated sense ; as, e.g., it is used in the phrases "all the families (races) of the earth," or "the whole family of man." Hence I cannot but regret that in the Revised Version the word "clan," which tells its own story, was not substituted for the ambiguous word "family," which is still retained.

an elected and faithful Remnant. But it does not stand alone. In subsequent Chapters it receives a wide and significant expansion. In Chapter xxxi. 29, 30, for example, he challenges a proverb which embodied in a popular form the warning of Moses, that the sins of the fathers should be visited on their children even to the third and fourth generation :<sup>1</sup> “ In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge ; but every one shall die for *his own* iniquity ; every man that eateth the sour grapes, *his* teeth shall be set on edge.” These words are the text on which Ezekiel preaches one of the most solemn, pathetic, and benign discourses contained in Holy Writ (Chap. xviii.) ; and as we shall consider that discourse in a minute or two I need only insist that Jeremiah’s text must be read in the light of Ezekiel’s discourse ; and point out that what is here denied is that men so suffer for their fathers’ sins as to have their fate determined by them ; that what is here affirmed, and affirmed in the plainest terms, is the personal responsibility of every man for his own transgressions.

More indirect, but not less conclusive, are those passages—and there are several—in which Jeremiah represents God as about to bring in a new and better time in which He will write his law, no longer on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tablets of men’s hearts, and put it into their most inward affections (Chapters xxxi. 31–34 ;

<sup>1</sup> This point is touched, and a reconciliation of the apparent contradiction is suggested, in my article on *Biogenesis and Degeneration* : see *The Expositor* (Second Series), vol. vii.

xxxii. 36-41).<sup>1</sup> For this inward inscription, this inward devotion to the pure and kindly will of God, must be an individual process, a personal experience. Neither a race, nor a remnant, can receive an inward and spiritual renewal saye as, one by one, its members are regenerated by the indwelling Spirit of God.

To Jeremiah, then, we must give the credit of initiating this great and happy change in the religious conceptions of the elect race. Taught by God, he, first, detached men from the community of which they formed part, and brought to them that sense of personal responsibility which is but another aspect of personal freedom. But it is not until we reach Ezekiel that the new conception is so developed and so emphasized as well-nigh to anticipate the teaching of St. Paul himself. If Paul is the apostle, Ezekiel is the prophet, of Individualism. It pervades his writings. *He* does not speak of it in hints or by indirection. He makes it the theme of chapter after chapter, discourse on discourse; as indeed we might expect, since in his very call to the prophetic ministry he was warned that he was to preach the individual responsibility of men (Chap. iii. 15-21). The fourteenth Chapter of his Prophecy, for instance, is wholly occupied with it; while the eighteenth is its very charter.

In Chapter xiv. he affirms of "every man" of the house of Israel who cherishes idols in his heart, that God will answer him according to the multitude of his

<sup>1</sup> Significant parallels to these passages will be found in Ezekiel xi. 19, 20; xxxvi. 25-28.

idols. He makes Jehovah affirm of “*every one* of the house of Israel, and of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, who separateth himself from God, and putteth the stumbling-block of his own iniquity before his face, . . . I, the Lord, will set my face against *that man*, . . . and will cut *him* off from the midst of my people” (Verses 1-8). That is to say, there is to be a personal doom for personal transgressions ; and this doom is to be inflicted whether the sinner be layman or prophet (Verses 9-11).

That there may be no misconception of the warning and no evasion of it, and that its universal scope may be recognized and felt, Ezekiel proceeds in the rest of the Chapter (Verses 12-21) to give a fourfold illustration of it in terms so striking and impressive that even to this day they search and shake the heart of every thoughtful reader. He imagines “*a land*,” *i.e.*, *any* land, afflicted by four heavy calamities or judgments, because its inhabitants have grievously trespassed against Heaven;<sup>1</sup> and then deals with it thus:—If I stretch out my hand, saith the Lord, and send famine upon it, breaking the staff of bread ; or, again, if I cause noisome beasts to pass through it, so that they despoil it ; or, again, if I bring a sword against it, and cut off from it man and beast ; or, once more, if I send pestilence upon it, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, “*though these three*

<sup>1</sup> It is instructive to note that the germ of this wonderful description is to be found in an earlier passage (Chap. v. 16, 17), and to mark to what that germ has grown in the study of the Prophet's imagination.

*men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, yet, as I live, saith the Lord, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter, they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.*" Four times in a few Verses this solemn warning, this impressive refrain, is repeated in the selfsame terms, as if to engrave it on the dullest imagination and the hardest heart; as if to convince the captive Hebrews, even against their will and in the teeth of their most familiar prejudices, that a new time was at hand in which every man would have to answer for himself, and for himself alone: as if to convince them that neither the fact that they could claim Abraham for their father, nor the fact that they were members of a chosen and sacred race, would avail them anything; that nothing would avail them but a personal repentance, a personal righteousness.

The selection of these three names—Noah, Daniel, and Job—has so perplexed the judgment of commentators that they have assigned diametrically opposite reasons for it; some attributing it to the fact that these illustrious men, though they had saved themselves, could not save others: and some attributing it to the fact that they did save others as well as themselves.

The former explain it thus. Though Noah was "a just man and a perfect," though he was "a preacher of righteousness," the wicked ancient world was not saved whether by his righteousness or by his preaching, but lost in the Flood. Though Daniel was the living and express type of Hebrew righteousness, a man in whom no fault could be found, he was unable to save either

others or himself from the Babylonian bondage, and could only save himself even from its worst misery and shame. And while Job received this testimony, that he was "perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil," he could not save his own children from the tempest of ruin that swept over him. And if these patterns of all righteousness could not save their own generation, their own kin even, by their righteousness, how could they possibly save the men of another generation and another land?

The other commentators argue—and, as I conceive, argue much more reasonably:—Noah did save at least his own sons and daughters by his righteousness; Daniel did save at least the three Hebrew Children who were flung with him into the flames of the burning fiery furnace; and Job, by his intercession, did save at least the three "friends" who had charged him foolishly: and what Ezekiel means is that even if these three men, who *had* saved others, were all in the same land at the same time, they would be unable to save any soul but their own.

But though they differ on this point, all the commentators whom I have consulted concur in affirming that these three names were selected in order to shew, in the most impressive and convincing way, that, in future, God would deal with every soul of man alone, make him answerable solely for himself; neither condemning him for the sins of his ancestors nor sparing him for the righteousness of his neighbours: that, in fine, the tribal or race relation to God was to give place to the indivi-

dual relation, that it was *the man* who was to be punished or rewarded, and not the community.

And there may have been, I venture to suggest, another reason for this selection of names. According to the Bible, Noah was not a Hebrew, but the second father of all mankind. Job, again, was not a Hebrew, though he may have been a descendant of Abraham on the unelect branch of his stem. And Daniel, though a Hebrew, was a dignified statesman in a foreign court, wearing a Gentile name and loaded with Gentile honours. For thus we reach that note of catholicity which the later Hebrew prophets and poets were for ever sounding—none more frequently than Ezekiel—and are taught that he is laying down a law of universal application, a rule of the Divine procedure which was to bear on every man, and on every race, whether of Jewish or of Gentile blood.

I have left myself little space for the discussion of Chapter xviii., which I have called the very Charter of Individualism. Nor shall I need much if you will not simply read, but peruse, this Chapter for yourselves, since it carries its message on its very surface. The Prophet here takes up that proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," which his predecessor Jeremiah had touched, treats it at length, traces it through all its ramifications, and repudiates it with irony and indignation. If a righteous man have a sinful and impenitent son, he asserts, the son will not be saved by his father's righteousness: "he shall surely die." And if a sinful father

beget an obedient son, the son "shall not die for his father's iniquity"; he shall as surely live as his father shall die. If a man once righteous turn away from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and persist in it, his righteousness shall not be remembered: "in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." And, again, if a wicked man turn away from his sins, and do that which is lawful and right, "he shall surely live, he shall not die; his transgression shall not be mentioned against him; by his righteousness he shall live." In short, the substance of the whole Chapter is summed up for us in such verses as these: "All souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die" (Verse 4): or, to quote a longer summary, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon *him*, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon *him*: but if the wicked turn away from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, *he shall surely live, he shall not die*" (Verses 20, 21): or, best of all, because most succinct and yet most decisive, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, *every one according to his ways*, saith the Lord God" (Verse 30).<sup>1</sup>

In the prophecies of Ezekiel, then, this transfer of the

<sup>1</sup> Where note, however, that the Prophet uses the tribal or collective name, "O house of Israel," even where he most emphatically asserts the personal responsibility of every Israelite.

religious unit from the tribe, or race, to the individual man is fully expanded, keenly emphasized, and we have a clear anticipation of that doctrine of personal accountability which, as taught by our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles, has gone far to recast the political as well as the religious life of the world. And I will only ask you to mark, in conclusion,—although this doctrine still needs to be limited and vindicated on many sides—that even yet the story may not be complete. There are many signs that a new chapter is being added to it at the present day. If the men of a clan, or of a race, thought of themselves collectively at first, and only after much teaching learned to think of themselves as holding an individual relation to God and their fellows ; and if the Bible, meeting their thoughts and responding to their needs, addressed itself to the collective conscience before it addressed itself to the individual heart, it does not follow that the one method of dealing with men contradicts the other, or that the earlier conception of human life is untrue because the later is true. The one conception may be—nay, is—the complement of the other ; and both methods may be destined to blend in a third, that the harmony may be complete. Men *are* individuals, and yet mankind is an unity. If their conscience is to be developed and enthroned, if their ethical and religious life is to be cultivated and raised, they must be treated one by one, must be made to feel their personal responsibility and trained to use their personal freedom. And yet if they are not to sink into mere selfishness, or into a selfish pursuit of their own religious interests, they

must also be treated as a whole, and taught to recognize their oneness with each other. "I am an I," and no man can answer for me whether to my conscience or to God. And yet I am one of a race, and many men, if not all my ancestors and contemporaries, may have much to answer for in what I am and what I become. Individualism may be a necessary stage in human culture ; but surely nothing short of universalism can be its goal.

And there are many tokens that this larger conception is now dawning on the human mind with new power, and robed in a splendour which attracts, if it also somewhat dazzles, the eyes of all who stand in "the foremost files" of the time. Not only do we hear much talk of the *solidarité* of races, and even of the human race, not only does the coming event cast before it the dark distorted shadows of Communism in the political and of Comtism in the religious world ; but, owing to the closer and more rapid communications of the present age, we are being made to feel, as men never felt before, that we are bound by many inseverable ties to all who are of one blood with us. No Englishman in any land can suffer wrong but we resent it. No body of them can settle on a distant shore but we are the richer for their acquisitions. No branch of our widespread family can achieve a victory of any kind but we share in their triumph. And, on the other hand, we cannot suffer any class to sink into ignorance but that we have to bear the consequences of their stupidity ; or to sink into want without their becoming a burden and a danger to us; or even to live in unwholesome conditions but they breed

diseases which slay us as well as them. In many ways we are feelingly persuaded that we all are brethren. Nor are the ties which bind us to our fellow-men confined within the limits of our own race. Nothing human is, or can be, alien to us. There is no savage or barbarous tribe on any of our borders which may not carry havoc and bloodshed within our borders. No war can take place in any part of the earth, no harvest fail, but we lose by it. No people can suffer any calamity large and striking enough to command attention but we suffer with them, and are constrained to go to their help. With our will, or against our will, we weep with all who weep, and rejoice with all who rejoice.

In fine, the word *Humanity* is growing big with new meanings for us. And, hence, religious men have set themselves to study the Gospel of Christ in a new light, and are finding in it new treasures of truth, suited to the time and its wants, every day. The change in the tone of the Church, of which we are all conscious, the more generous and vital forms in which it is casting the old truths, the larger hopes which it cherishes, its more rooted and settled belief in the fatherly and redeeming love of God and in the universal scope of the salvation wrought by Christ, all spring from the same source and tend in the same direction. It is the spirit of the time which is urging on these changes and discoveries: and to as many as believe that, whatever other and ill spirits may be abroad, the ruling spirit of this and of every age is the Spirit of God, these new and larger conceptions are nothing short of an immediate gift from Heaven. They

inspire us with the hope that, while the first religious unit was the tribe, and the second religious unit was the individual man, the final religious unit will be a whole world redeemed and renewed into the service and love of God, and bound into a sacred unity by "the bond of perfectness." We who rejoice to hear St. Paul declare that he would even be accursed from Christ for his brethren's sake, and to see Christ Himself "becoming a curse" for those whom even He was not ashamed to call his brethren, how can we but rejoice to hear a modern philanthropist say, "I am sick unto death of the religion which is for ever asking, What is to become of *Me*?" instead of asking, "What is to become of *men*, my brethren?" how can we but rejoice to hear a modern poet sing,

Heaven is not heaven for *me* alone.  
Rich through my brethren's poverty?  
Such wealth were hideous ! I am blest  
Only in what they share with me,  
In what I share with all the rest.

These men, we say, have the very mind which was in Christ ; and only anticipate by a few years what the whole Church will soon joyfully believe and proclaim. For they are looking forward, as He looked forward, to the day when all the kingdoms of this world will merge and blend into the kingdom of our God and his Christ and all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest.

## II.

### *THE WINESKIN IN THE SMOKE.*

“For I am become like a bottle in the smoke ; yet do I not forget thy statutes.”—PSALM cxix. 83.

IF any of you are tempted to smile at the homeliness of this figure, or because it is grotesquely vacant of meaning for you, the fault is in our translators rather than in yourselves. There is nothing ludicrous in the Original, however homely it may be ; and, so far from being meaningless, it is full of wise and profitable suggestion. You have only to note the word by which “bottle” is replaced in the margin—as it ought to be in the text—of our Revised Version ; you have only to learn, or to remember, that both the connecting particles of the Verse are very flexible, and may take several forms without doing violence to the Hebrew, in order to discharge every ludicrous association from this quaint maxim, and to throw it into a very sober, wholesome, and suggestive form. Read it, as two of our greatest Hebraists do (Ewald and Delitzsch), “*Although I am become as a wineskin hung in the smoke, yet do I not forget thy statutes ;*” or, as a possible alternative, read it thus, “*For*

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I am become as a wineskin in the smoke, *because* I do not forget thy statutes," and you will no longer be tempted to smile at it ; you will begin to see in what direction its meanings lie, and that it points your thoughts to truths of the gravest kind. For, in the first case, the allusion is to the fidelity of a good man under severe pressures of trial and affliction. Though, under these pressures, he shrinks, and wastes, and blackens like a wineskin hung in the smoke of the chimney fire for daily use, he still remembers the Divine statutes, which are at once a promise and a command—"commandments with promise ;" he still holds fast his faith in God and duty. In the second case, the allusion is to the secret and reward of this fidelity. For it was a custom of the ancients (Rosenmüller) to hang skins of wine in the smoke of a fire for very much the same reason that we sometimes stand a bottle of claret on the hearth, in order to mellow the wine by a gradual and moderate warmth, and to bring it to an earlier perfection. And in that custom the Psalmist finds an illustration of the meaning, and of the mercy, of the afflictions to which he has been exposed. They have been sent to act on him like the warm smoke on the wine, to refine, mellow, and ripen his character ; and because, under them all, he has refused to part with his faith in God and duty, because he has been true to God and God's statutes, they have had their intended and proper effect upon him.

These are the two main meanings, or suggestions, of this quaint and homely figure. And, of course, if we were simply *studying* the Word of God, we should have

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to choose between them, and to give the palm to the first. But as—here at least, in the house of God—we are reading his Word *for edification*, we may take as many meanings as the Verse suggests in so far as they are true and wholesome for us. Let us look, then, at both these meanings, or suggestions, and mark what they have to teach us.

1. But, first of all, it will help us to accept and value his teaching if we can make out what manner of man this was who, as he sat by the hearth of a Hebrew cottage, looked up to the wineskin hanging in the chimney, and saw in it a quaint and curious likeness to his own soul. It is not easy to recover any authentic and indubitable traces of him ; for, so far as we know, we have no work of his but the Psalm before us ; and in this Psalm, if we press it too hard or inquire of it too curiously, his image grows indistinct and evasive, capable of taking many forms. Thus, for instance, one great scholar is quite sure that he was a young poet, mainly because he asks (Verse 9), “ Wherewithal shall *a young man* keep his path pure ? ” and replies, “ By walking, with good heed, according to thy word.” While another great scholar is equally sure that he was “ an old and experienced saint,” mainly because he either asks or exclaims (Verse 84), “ How *many* are the days of thy servant ? ” But if instead of thus pressing isolated and dubious expressions ; if, instead of curiously inquiring for his name, or age, or history, we look at the main structure and substance of his Song, and ask what his *character* was, we may reach certain conclusions about him in

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which every scholar, and indeed all men of good sense, will concur.

From the complex, elaborate, and artificial structure of the Psalm, for example, we may reasonably infer that he lived in one of the latest periods of Hebrew literature, when the Jews were groaning under the tyranny of foreign, *i.e.*, of Gentile, rulers, who hated "the Hebrew superstition" almost as much as the Hebrew obstinacy ; and thus we get a valuable glimpse into the larger outward conditions of his life, which every section of the Psalm verifies and confirms. From the substance and general tone of the Psalm we cannot err in inferring that he loved the Word of God so dearly that he was never weary of meditating on its different aspects of law and promise, comfort and judgment. Indeed he himself expressly tells us that he meditated on it day and night ; that it was his most trusted guide, his dearest possession, his most familiar and beloved friend. A lamp to his feet, a light to his path, sweeter than honey to his taste, more precious to him than gold, yea, than much fine gold, it was his consolation in all his distresses and the life of his delights. Yet it was full of beauties and wonders which as yet he had not explored, and embraced many counsels of perfection which he had not mastered and obeyed ; so that his one prayer was for more light to read it by, and more strength to walk by and obey it.

Nor can any attentive reader of the Psalm doubt that his love of the Word, his confidence in God, had been profoundly tried. The time was out of joint. Men clothed in a little brief authority, and the more proud

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and cruel because their authority was new and brief, had set themselves against him. The *wicked* were in power, and strained their power to injure and abase him. It was his very righteousness, his deference to God's authority rather than theirs, his devotion to God's will, which provoked their hostility. It was the injustice of his sufferings, it was because he suffered for that which was good, for that which was best in him, that anguish and distress took hold on him, and he made supplication unto his Judge. Yet the Lord and Lover of righteousness did not answer, did not deliver him. "*When* wilt thou comfort me?" he cries. Yet no comfort came, save from the Word which he would not let go. The God in whom he trusts does not save him—does not save him *from* his afflictions at least, though He may be saving him *by* them : for the wine may be getting the riper because the skin hangs in the smoke.

These are, perhaps, the main features of the man of which we can be sure ; and even these suffice to make him real and human to us, spirit of our spirit and heart of our heart, as well as bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. They also suffice to give power and pathos to the words of my text. For it is no dainty philosopher, no smiling moralist, of the schools, who comes to us with his abstract maxims and unproved advice, offering to "patch" our "grief with proverbs," "give preceptial medicine" to our wounds, "charm ache with air and agony with words." No, it is rather "one whose wrongs do suit with ours," one who has shared the grief to which he speaks comfort. It is a fellow-traveller who has himself

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trod the steep dark path which baffles our foresight and strains our strength, and who has fainted and grown weary under the very load of sorrow under which our hearts throb and ache. It is a fellow-soldier who has stood in the thick of the very conflict in which we are trying to quit ourselves like men, and bled from wounds like our own. And, therefore, his words should have power with us ; we may well "gather patience" and hope from him.

"All this," however, you may say, "is very indefinite. There is no individualizing touch in it ; for there have been many good men who have loved God's Word, and have been true to it in toil and conflict. Can you not make our Comforter more real, by making him more individual, to us ? "

Well, there is one quality in the man, and a somewhat rare one, which comes out very markedly, I think, in the single poem he has left us. He is not only a man of letters *and* a man of affairs, although that is, perhaps, an unusual combination. He is not only a poet, and a man well versed and well practised in the labours, sorrows, and conflicts of human life. He is also a poet of a quaint, a peculiar, turn, who loves to set himself difficult feats and takes a singular pleasure in achieving them. He is one who can express a very sincere and even passionate love in an elaborate artifice ; one to whom it is natural to leave the beaten tracks, and to throw his emotion into forms which would be unnatural to most of his fellows.

Probably we have all known a few such men as this. As a rule, they are not, perhaps, men of quite the first

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force, the front rank, the finest genius ; but they are men who have a remarkable power over as many as love them. There is commonly a touch of humour in them. They neither look at things nor speak of them as most men do, but in a way of their own, and a way which often seems a little forced and wilful to us, though it may be quite native and sincere in them. Of the six or seven such men that I have known the majority have been mathematicians, who are often, I think, a little humorous and eccentric ; but one was a preacher and one an aurist. There was a time in our own literature, as there was also in that of France, when men of this stamp were more common than they are now. According to Pope's classification of the English poets, the whole "school of Donne" were distinguished by this "note." They were for ever using difficult or inventing new metres, attempting unheard-of feats, courting and overcoming seeming impossibilities, studying to be singular, rare, quaint : men —to mention only two names which will suggest many more—such as George Herbert in whom originality rose to genius, down to Quarles in whose "Emblems" it sank to mere oddity and strangeness.

Our Psalmist was an ancient member, an ancient master, of that school,—this is the individualizing touch which classifies him. For, surely, no man who had a rare and deep love for God and God's word ever took a more singular and eccentric way of shewing it. "Acrostic" psalms were not unknown in Israel, at least from the time of Jeremiah. Many a man had written a poem the verses of which began with the successive letters of

the Hebrew alphabet : a few of these are embalmed in the Psalter. But here was a man who must shew his love for the Divine Word by writing a Psalm of as many stanzas as there were letters in the Hebrew alphabet ; each stanza to consist of eight verses ; each of these eight verses to begin with the same letter ; each of the letters to follow in its proper alphabetical order : while, to make the feat arduous almost to impossibility, every one of the hundred and seventyand sixverses must contain one of the names for God's Law which the Hebrew language contained !

The enormous difficulty of such a feat is obvious, and the peculiar idiosyncrasy of the man who attempted it. He must have been what we should call " an original," what ourfathers would probably have called a "humourist" —a man who looked at things with his own eyes, thought of them for himself, tinged them with his own humour, and spake of them in a tongue that would fit no mouth but his own. And I make no doubt that in his talk on any topic he was as full of peculiar views and strange surprises as Clerk Maxwell, of whom a friend gently complained that "you never knew what he was going to say next," or as James Hinton, who could hardly open his mouth but out there flew some startling paradox ; while it is very certain that he was as "closely dedicated" to the service of truth and righteousness as either of those good men.

2. Now it is this constant loyalty of soul, this profound and stedfast devotion to God, to God's will, to God's word, which we most need to bear in mind. When

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we wish to individualize the Psalmist in our thoughts, we may conceive of him as a man of an original genius who, with a slow, wise, humorous smile curling about his lips, could compare his over-pressed dejected soul to the shrinking wineskin darkening in the smoke ; but, if we are to listen to him with profit, we must remember that no pressure of affliction could shake his love for the Divine statutes, or render him unfaithful to them. It is his good fidelity which entitles him to teach, enables him to comfort us. For, in *our* hours of trial, we are apt to think that a very strange thing has happened to us, that no one was ever tried as we are, or went patiently on his way under a burden as heavy as our own ; and it is true comfort to our grief to learn that many a good man has had as much, and even more, to bear, and yet has borne it cheerfully. We are tempted to conclude that God has forgotten us, or ceased to care for us ; that we are none the better for having served Him ; that it is our very fidelity to Him which has brought upon us a weight of affliction we can hardly endure. And in that hour of temptation it is an unspeakable comfort to meet with a wise and experienced man who can tell us that he has been through the very trials we have to face ; that he has been tempted, as well as tried, even as we are ; but that in all his trials and temptations he has held fast his confidence in God, pressed his word still closer to his heart ; and that God has at last justified his confidence and redeemed his word.

And this is the comfort which our Psalmist offers us. Our path is not darker and steeper than his ; it can

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hardly be so steep and dark. In a time when Injustice sat on the throne, and Wickedness framed or bent the laws—such a time, for example, as that of the Persian satraps, or of the Greek tyrants against whom the Maccabees waged their heroic conflict—he must have been hourly exposed to the loss of all things, and was, in all probability, stripped of much that is dear to man—as comfort, health, friends, reputation, security. He was “persecuted,” he tells us, *i.e.*, marked out for spoliation and destruction, and often despaired of life itself. His eyes failed, his soul fainted. And his trial was embittered by the very elements which, as we have seen, make trial hardest to bear. It was for his goodness that he suffered, for his fidelity to the Divine law by which he believed human life to be governed. And his deliverance was delayed till his heart grew sick with hope deferred.

Now when we suffer *for our sins*, we recognize a certain justice in our punishment, and brace ourselves to meet it. It is when our sufferings are unprovoked, when we are wronged, when the sense of injustice empoisons our losses and cares and griefs, when we suffer for our love of truth or for welldoing, that our sufferings wound us most keenly. For then we are apt to think that God does not rule, or that He does not care ; that his law does not really govern the lives of men, or that we have failed to read that law aright. And when we thus doubt truth itself to be a liar, doubt whether after all righteousness *is* the secret of peace, doubt whether God is our Friend and Saviour, the very springs of courage and hope dry up within us. Even if we still cleave to our confidence

in God and his Word, if we still beseech Him to manifest himself to us and his truth, if we are still sure that to do that which is right must bring a man peace at the last, yet if we receive no answer to our prayer, if the clouds do not clear but return after the rain, if the Divine Ruler does not vindicate his law, if the Divine Friend delays his coming, and obedience still lands us in fresh struggles and miseries: if, in short, all that makes life bright, rich, dear, is still denied us—our faith is strained till it well-nigh snaps, and the light of hope almost, if not altogether, expires.

Yet all this, which seems so strange and intolerable to us, was familiar to the Psalmist, and was borne by him without impatience, though not without an effort which proves him to have been a man of like passions with ourselves. In the midst of it all he sits down and indites the good matter of this Psalm—praising the very law which seems to have failed him, the very God who seems to have forgotten him. Anguish and distress have taken hold upon him, but they have not drawn him away from God and the word of God. His life is like the wineskin which the Hebrew householder hangs in the chimney that it may be fit and handy for present use, which is not only darkened by the smoke but drained for the daily use of the household. All that is bright and hilarious, all that quickens hope and joy, is fading from him, daily dwindling from less to less; yet he will not forget God or his statutes, for these are the true sources of strength and courage, joy and hope. God may, and does, delay to appear on his behalf, to vindicate

his law, to redeem his servant, to execute judgment on those who have persecuted and dug pits for him. A great craving is rising in his soul for vindication and deliverance ; a great grief that they should be so long and so often postponed : for who does not recognize the ring of a true cry out of the depths in the ejaculation he casts up to God, “ *When* wilt thou comfort me ; ” and in the prayer, “ O turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name ” ? But, none the less, he holds on his way, and grows stronger and stronger, until, at last, he can comfort and assure our hearts with this ingenious yet pathetic Psalm, in which he sings of God’s word as the best guide of youth, the best support of age, and teaches us to trust in a God who does not save when and as we expect to be saved, and to believe in a law which does not seem to work out true. And we cannot put away the teaching, or refuse the comfort ; for he speaks out of an anguish and distress like our own, yet deeper than our own.

3. Suppose, then, finally, we turn the Verse round, read it in the second sense of which I spoke, and suffer it to suggest the reason of this indomitable faith, this brave and cheerful confidence, under the sharpest pressures of trial. Instead of reading it, “ *Although* I am become like a wineskin in the smoke, *yet* do I not forget thy statutes,” let us read it, “ For I am become like a wineskin in the smoke, *because* I do not forget thy statutes.” Read thus, we have only to remember the custom of the ancient vintners, how they hung skins of wine in the warm smoke that the wine might be the

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more rapidly mellowed, the sooner brought to perfection and fitted for use, in order to reach the secret of which we are in search. For it then becomes plain that the intention of the figure is to suggest that, to those who do not forget God's statutes when they are most tempted to forget them, to those who are true to Him and his Word through all the changes of life and time, trials are a discipline which refines, mellows, ripens their character, brings them to an earlier perfection than they could otherwise reach, and fits them more rapidly for the service of God and man.

Now if that be true, all who care for character more than condition, all who make it their chief end to become perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, all whose ruling ambition it is to be useful—in short, all who cherish the Christian aim, may well rejoice in tribulation also, however unwelcome it may be to flesh and blood. And that it *is* true (whether or not the Psalmist meant to teach it here) no student of Scripture can doubt, nor indeed any man who studies human life in a religious spirit. Trial may not always be good for a bad man, or even for the man who, without being distinctively bad, cares less for truth and righteousness, for perfection in thought and conduct, than for success in business, for sensuous enjoyment, for social or political advancement, or for any other of the common and subordinate aims of human life which men too often lift into the first and highest place. To them, loss, failure, pain, bereavement, may mean judgment; they *may* lower, harden, embitter them. But for a good man, for a man who has honestly

set his heart on perfection and usefulness, for a man who loves God, and lives by his law, and trusts in his care, trial is discipline, and a discipline of perfection.

This, at least, is the constant teaching of Holy Writ, and, above all, of Him who was Himself made perfect by suffering. And I believe you will all admit this teaching to be confirmed by the readings of history, and by your own observation and experience of life. For you can hardly read the biography of any man who became genuinely or greatly good without finding it a record of trials which tasked, and by tasking developed, his courage, his patience, his love of that which is true, his devotion to that which is right. And the best men and women you have known, are they not those who have had much to do and much to endure, and who have won from their tasks and trials an ampler capacity for bearing with and serving their fellows, of being patient with the impatient, kind even to the evil and unthankful, and calm, cheerful, brave under all the perils and perplexities of change and fear and loss? Their wine has hung in the smoke till it grew mellow, till it was fit for use.

And the great Vinedresser and Winemaker is dealing with you as He once dealt with them; and has the same beneficent end in view. He is trying you that He may make you perfect. He is making heavy demands on your faith, your courage, your constancy, your hopefulness, your charity, your patience, that these virtues and graces of the spirit may do their perfect work in you. Will you not trust Him, then? Will you not hide his law in your hearts, that all trial may have its proper

effect, *i.e.*, a ripening effect upon you? What though the smoke of these "fiery trials" sting and corrode and tarnish the skin, if only the wine is growing mellow and fit for the Master's use? if only you may know the blessedness of the man whom He chasteneth, and teacheth out of his law?

### III.

#### *ALL THINGS ARE THY SERVANTS.*

“For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations : thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They abide this day according to thine ordinances : for all things are thy servants.”—PSALM cxix. 89-91.

JUDGED by his own, and, so far as we know, only work, the author of this Psalm was a man wholly devoted to God, and to the Word of God. His confidence in that word, or law, as the true rule of human life, had been exposed to the severest trials. He had seen the wicked in authority, using and straining their power to oppress and destroy the righteous. He himself had been called to suffer a long agony of anguish and distress, in which his soul fainted within him, simply because he would obey the highest rule he knew. In the time of his tribulation he had besought the Judge of all the earth to do him right, to vindicate the word in which he put his trust, to deliver him from his afflictions. And though neither answer nor deliverance came, he held fast his integrity ; he refused to forget the statutes for his obedience to which he suffered, or to relinquish his trust in the God who did not save him.

All this he tells us of himself, but tells us in the most singular form,—in a Psalm which is confessedly the most artificial, complex, and elaborate in the whole Psalter, a Psalm which is a literary feat of the most deliberate, and not of the noblest, kind ; a Psalm, moreover, which abounds in quaint and curious touches or conceits such as that of Verse 83, in which he compares his soul, wasting and darkening under the pressure of affliction, to the wineskin which the Hebrew yeoman hung in his chimney for daily consumption,—the skin shrivelling and blackening, but the wine growing ripe and mellow, in the warmth of the smoke. Poets of this stamp need not be insincere, however, although the curious and artificial structure of their verse tempts us to charge them with insincerity. They are the creatures of their time, and of the literary fashions of their time : and the passion or devotion which they so ingeniously express may be as truly and deeply felt as that which we should utter in a more simple and direct way. Nevertheless, as I have admitted,<sup>1</sup> they are seldom men of quite “the first force, the front rank, the highest genius,” though they may, now and again, throw out a thought so noble that the world will never let it die, or express a genuine and deep emotion in perfect words, and so bequeath us one of those rare gems, five words long,

That on the stretched forefinger of all time  
Sparkle for ever.

No such gem will be found, I think, in the cabinet

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 24, 25.

of *our* poet, though there is much to cherish and admire in his fine saying about the wineskin in the smoke. Nor does he, like David or Isaiah, often rise to any height of thought which can fairly be called sublime. For the most part he keeps the lower level of sagacious proverb or quaint analogy; but now and then he unlocks a deep secret of life, as when, in Verse 45,<sup>1</sup> he teaches us that freedom is to be won only by obedience to law, that men only walk at large when they keep God's commandments; and, once at least, he rises to a breadth, a grandeur, a sublimity of thought which is the more impressive because we had not suspected that his wings would ever bear him so high.

The Prologue of St. John's Gospel is confessed by all critics to be one of the sublimest passages in Holy Writ, if not the most sublime. And I do not see how any attentive student can read the Verses now before us without being reminded of that Prologue. The theme is the same in both; *viz.*, the Word, or *Logos*, of God. "All things were made by him," says St. John. "Thy word, O Lord, which is for ever, is in the heavens and in the earth," says the Psalmist; in them as a creative, vital, formative power; "for," he adds, "both heaven and earth continue to this day in virtue of that indwelling Word, and all things are thy servants." "Thy Word," says the Apostle, "is the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "Thy Word," affirms the Psalmist, "runs and endures through, enlightens and

<sup>1</sup> A discourse on this verse will be found in *Biblical Expositions*, Art. V.

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controls all generations." Nor is he, any more than the Apostle, simply asserting an absolute or abstract truth when he affirms that both Nature and Providence, both the physical universe and the history of man, are moulded by and contain a revelation of the word or will of God. It is because this truth bears on practice, on the daily round of conduct, because it enables him to confront the else intolerable miseries and mysteries of life, because it brings him comfort in all his sorrows and pours a stedfast light of hope through all his fears and anxieties, that he dwells upon it and values it more "than thousands of gold and silver." He rejoices that God's Word is to be seen in the course and order of nature and in all the changes of time, that all things express and serve God's will, *because he has made that word his choice*; because he too desires above all else to serve that will; because, therefore, all things serve his will as well as God's; because the Word which governs all things must be a true and faithful word, a word in which he shall find "life" (Verse 93) and salvation (Verse 94), in which therefore he may at once find comfort and support under all his afflictions. And it is this practical inference and application of his thought which renders it as valuable to us as it was to him.

Hence I am not about to invite you to a critical examination of these Verses, and of the different ways in which they have been translated or interpreted. There are difficulties here, diversities of opinion, clashings of authority with authority, which make such an examination more suitable to the study than the pulpit. Nor do

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I think that even in the Original the form of the Psalmist's thought is as noble as its substance. The final clause indeed, "All things are thy servants," or, "The universe is thy minister," deserves to be cut deep on our memories, and will well repay any labour we may expend upon it ; for here word and thought, form and substance, are worthy of each other. But for the rest, it is the thought itself, rather than the expression of it, which solicits and commands our admiration. And for us, who are apt to think and speak of God's Word as if it were confined within the covers of a single book, the thought that the Word of God reveals itself in all the wonders of the universe and all the vicissitudes of human life must have a special value : for we too often forget that all things in heaven and on earth, throughout the whole course of time, express and serve the pure strong will of the Almighty and Allwise.

First, then, the Psalmist finds God's Word *in Nature*, in the whole physical universe. All our modern talk about atoms, impelled by forces, and controlled by laws, until by some happy accident, or as the final result of an endless series of experiments and failures, they issued in the ordered universe we see around us, would have been as incredible to him as it was unknown. To him, the universal order spoke of One who ordered all things according to the good pleasure of his will. It was the word of God by which both the heavens and the earth were created and "settled" in their present frame. Nor could he conceive of God as having made the universe, as having treasured up in it a store of energy, as having implanted in these

energies the laws by which their activity was to be guided and controlled, and as then retiring from the vast machine to see how it would go. Behind all forces and laws he saw a Hand which still governed them, and a Heart which could still feel for those who suffered under the iron necessities of nature: through and above them all he saw a living Father and Lord who could so control and modify their action and effects as to constrain them to minister to the welfare of his children. Not only were the heavens and the earth "settled" by the word of God: it is "by his ordinances that they continue to this day."

And, then, having found God in the outer world of nature, he finds Him also in the inner world of *Providence*. As life can only spring from life, so he believed that our life could only have come from the Living One. It was as incredible to him as to Carlyle that we should have derived being, intelligence, conscience, love, "from an entity which had none of its own." And as human life sprang from God, was called into being by his word, is therefore an expression of his will, so also the Psalmist held that it is guided through its whole course, from generation to generation, and amid all the changes of time, by the true and faithful Will in which it had its origin.

If this should seem too large an inference to draw from the words "Thy faithfulness is *unto all generations*," it is amply warranted by these other words, "All things are thy servants," and the application of them which the Psalmist makes to his own conditions and prospects.

For, as I have already suggested, what he really means to say is: "Always, and everywhere, I see the word of God verifying itself in many ways; in the heavens and on the earth, in the experience of each successive generation. And, therefore, oppressed as I am by manifold afflictions, though I see injustice on the throne and power in the hands of the wicked, though I am in the toils of the unrighteous because I love and pursue that which is right and good, though no voice replies to my cry for deliverance, and no eye pities, and no arm saves, I will not cease to hope. All that perplexes me in the natural world and in the windy ways of men must be capable of solution, though I cannot solve it; for all things reveal the will of God, all are his servants, and must therefore minister to the welfare of those who are of one mind and will with Him."

This is, in brief, as all critics and commentators are agreed, the general meaning of these Verses: and, as you will see at once, that which is most valuable to us in it, and yet most difficult for faith to grasp, is the practical conclusion at which the Psalmist arrives. We cheerfully admit the grandeur, the sublimity, of his conception of the universal scope of the word, or will, of God. And we should gladly believe that all the forces of the physical universe, all the movements of Providence, all the changes of time, are expressions of his will, that they verify and fulfil his word, that, because they are his servants, they must and do minister to our welfare. But there are difficulties in the way. If we find much in Nature which is friendly, we also find much that seems cruel and

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inimical to us. If the vicissitudes of time bring us much good, they also take much from us, and inflict on us many losses, many pains, many griefs. The evidence is not all on one side ; and hence our verdict often hangs in doubt. No man can seriously interrogate himself and the world around him without meeting many problems which he cannot solve, many mysteries which he cannot fathom. And these problems and mysteries are not bare abstractions which, because they have no ostensible bearing on life and duty, we can be content to leave unanswered. They enter into the whole scheme and purpose and aim of human life, and often cut our hearts with so keen an edge that we can have no peace till some answer to them be won. It would be an unspeakable comfort to us to believe that all things serve God, and therefore serve us : but how can we believe it in the teeth of the cruel and sorrowful facts with which experience daily confronts us ?

No question is more momentous or more pressing than this. But, before I attempt to suggest an answer to it, let me remind you that the Psalmist, who by example as well as word asks us to believe that “*the all*” is God’s minister for our good, had himself to confront the very facts which task our faith. His mind was vexed, his heart bruised and wounded, by a still more painful experience than ours. Nature was as cruel and mysterious, at least in some of her aspects, to him as she is to us. And man was still more cruel. He was hunted down and bound “*in the cords*” (Ver. 61) of rulers and judges to whom his very righteousness, his very

endeavour to live by God's law, rendered him obnoxious (Vers. 121, 143, 157, 161). He had known many losses. He was suffering in body and in soul, suffering most of all from the injustice to which he was exposed (Ver. 157), and the apparent lack of sympathy whether in heaven or on earth (Vers. 92, 123). Anguish and affright had seized upon him (Ver. 143). It is from the depths of a long and lonely agony that he looks up to God and says, "All things are thy servants, and therefore I can welcome them all." And what man has done, man can do. If it was not impossible for him to believe in the truth and goodness of God, even when God hid Himself from him in clouds so dense and dark as these, it should not be impossible for us who know God better than he did, and have much more reason to trust Him.

What else, indeed, *can* we do? As we stand before the frowning mysteries of time and change, only one alternative is before us. Either we must understand them all ourselves or hope to understand them, or we must confide in One who does understand them, though we do not. But to solve all problems, to know all mysteries, is not possible to such creatures as we are in such a world as this. And, therefore, our only hope of rest and peace lies in trusting Him from whom nothing is hid, in believing that, because all things serve Him, all must serve us.

Is such a faith impossible to us, or even unreasonable? is it purely a leap in the dark? Not if we believe in God at all, and in the word of God. If, so far as we can comprehend his ways in Nature, we find perpetual signs

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and proofs of his goodness, find even that many of those things which seem to be against us prove to be for us ; if so far as we can comprehend the methods of his Providence, we find that here too storms and tempests clear the air, and trial brings manliness, and manliness courage and hope ; if we have learned to find in loss a gain to match, and in sorrow a discipline of strength and therefore a promise of joy,—we may reasonably believe that the evils which as yet we do not understand are designed both to prepare us for and to work out for us a greater good. Faith is inevitable in those who know so little as we do. The only question is *what* we shall believe, *in whom* we shall put our trust. And if we believe in God, believe that it is his word which settled the heavens and the earth, that it is by his ordinances they stand fast to this day, believe that it is his will which guides and controls all the changes of time, marshals the advance of generation after generation, and works out the increasing purpose which runs through the ages, we may well believe that all things, even those whose errand we do not yet grasp, are his servants ; *i.e.*, we may well believe it in the selfsame sense with the Psalmist, *viz.*, that all things contribute to our ultimate welfare, because all serve a Will which we know to be good and kind. We may well believe it even though we go for the Word of God only where the Psalmist went for it in these Verses—to the facts of Nature and the testimony of Providence. But if, like the Psalmist in other parts of his Psalm, we also go for that Word to the revelations of Himself which God has made by the

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mouth of his prophets, by the men who were most conversant with the secrets of his will, O, then, we leave ourselves without excuse if we do not hold fast our confidence in Him. For these were men who suffered far more than we have suffered for the word and testimony of God, and yet never wholly lost faith in the goodness, or in the final victory, of his will. They were destitute, afflicted, evil-entreated. They were stoned ; they were sawn asunder ; they were slain with the sword. They wandered in deserts and on mountains. They hid themselves in dens and holes of the earth. None of them "received" the promise, or saw the Word that was with God take flesh and dwell among us. And yet their faith triumphed over all, and turned all to service. Shall not we, then, trust in the God in whom they trusted, through whom they triumphed, and say, "All things are thy servants, and all must serve us, since all fulfil thy word" ?

Before us, even as behind,  
God is, and all is well.

## IV.

### *SENTIMENT AND SENTIMENTALISM.*

“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father ; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.”  
—JOHN xx. 17.

FROM the beginning our Lord strove to prepare his disciples for the death which took away the sin of the world, and for that great victory over death by which He threw open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. As his ministry drew to a close He redoubled his efforts to prepare and fortify their hearts—assuring them that it was expedient for them that He should go away, and that, if He went away, He would “come again,” to abide with them for ever. With a loving and stedfast patience, He strove to comfort and sustain their hearts, during the brief hours of his absence, by kindling in them the hope of a more perfect re-union with Him.

This re-union, as we know, was to be, for the most part, spiritual, the earthly was to rise into a heavenly fellowship. Christ was to be with them, as He is with us, in the power and grace of his spirit, forming them in his image, infusing into their minds the mind that was

in Him, and carrying on his work by their hands. His visible appearances to them after He rose from the dead were intended to confirm the hope of this more inward and spiritual fellowship. By permitting them to see Him in his spiritual body, and to witness his ascension into heaven, He designed to make it more easy for them to follow Him into the spiritual and eternal world on which He was about to enter, and in which alone they could see Him as He really was and be like Him. There was, however, one great danger in their renewed intercourse with Him after He had risen. The danger was lest they should mistake this friendly but transient intercourse on earth for that inward and heavenly fellowship of spirit to which He sought to lift them, and by which alone they could be strengthened for their perilous but honourable mission to the world.

The danger was no imaginary one ; for it was this very mistake into which they fell, at least for a time. When they saw Him alive again after his passion they asked Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel ?" assuming that He *would* take to Himself his power and reign on the earth ; assuming that it was in his visible presence and earthly reign that they were to find the fulfilment of his promise.

No wonder, then, that Mary Magdalene fell into the same mistake with the Eleven. When the risen Christ appears to her, she loses herself in a mere ecstasy of joy at his recovered presence, thinks only that she has got Him back again, and would fain fling herself before Him and clasp his sacred feet, as if she were never to be

separated from Him more. She has forgotten the higher meaning of his promise—the inward fellowship of spirit with spirit. But Christ has not forgotten it; nor will He permit her to forget it for more than a moment. “Touch me not,” He cries, “for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” And whatever else his words may mean, they are evidently intended to remind her of the spiritual and heavenly fellowship by which, according to his promise, their earthly friendship was to be replaced.

But why was this warning addressed to Mary, and to Mary alone? The other women who ministered to Christ were permitted to touch Him unrebuked. “They came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him;” and all that Jesus said to them was, “Be not afraid:” why does He say to Mary, and say, as we think, with a tone of some coldness and reserve, “Touch me not”? Nay, He Himself *invited* Thomas to touch his hands and his side, that he might see and believe, and bade the whole Apostolic company to “handle” Him, and convince themselves that He was not an unclothed, a disembodied, spirit: why, then, does He reprove Mary for simply clasping his feet? The question has bred wonder and perplexity in many thoughtful tender hearts. And yet the answer to it is easy to any student of the Greek, and is at last suggested even to the English reader by a note in the margin of our revised New Testament. The Greek verb rendered “Touch me not” means, literally, “Take not *hold* of me.” What it rebukes is not such a touching as would convince Mary of the reality or the identity of the august Figure before her,

nor such a clasping as would simply express reverence and affection ; but such a holding as implied a wish or a purpose to *retain* it. What our Lord meant was, therefore, “ Do not *cling*, do not *cleave* to a mere outward or bodily form, but aspire rather to that true fellowship of kindred minds, of hearts that beat in unison, of spirits bent on one aim, to which I have invited you. Do not seek to appropriate me to yourself, but go and make me known to others.” And what He said to her, He would have said to all, had there been need ; nay, did say to all, since there was need : for henceforth He would have no man know Him after the flesh ; and in all his intercourse with his disciples after his resurrection He was manifestly seeking to help them to believe in, to love and serve, One whom they were no longer to see.

That the warning was given to Mary so immediately and emphatically, while to the other disciples it was only given gradually and inferentially, simply proves that her need of it was more immediate and deep than theirs—as we can easily understand that it should be. For all extreme and passionate excitement of personal emotion carried a special danger for her. She had been a demoniac. “ *Seven devils*” had been cast out of her. And in whatever dark and evasive region of the spiritual world we are to seek its origin, whatever else and more it was, demoniacal possession was a kind of mania ; it implied that the balance of the moral, as well as of the mental, nature had been fatally disturbed. In the strangest way it blended strange opposites—the profoundest melancholy with irrational and extravagant

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violence, self-absorption with self-disregard, a quickened egotism with a divided consciousness, love of evil with hatred of evil, self-love with self-loathing, a terrible fear of death with a fierce craving to be quit of life. A nature which has been thus perilously deranged once, is long liable to be deranged again by any absorbing passion, any violent excitement whether of sorrow or of joy: it is perilously apt to relapse; and if it relapse, its last state is only too likely to be worse than its first.

If we remember that Mary of Magdala had been a demoniac of the worst type, and still carried in herself a perilous tendency to relapse under any violent strain of emotion, we can see both why Christ shewed Himself *first* to her, and why He checked the ecstasy of her joy at beholding Him again. Since she was least able to endure the overwhelming sorrow of losing Him, He comes straight from the sepulchre to bind up her wounded heart, to assure her that she has not lost Him. And, since joy was hardly less perilous to her than grief, He checks and moderates her joy at recovering Him by giving a new turn to her thoughts, by fixing her attention on a great impersonal truth which would grow the more deep and marvellous and hopeful the longer she reflected on it; and by calling her to active service, by compelling her to think of others rather than herself—by sending her with glad tidings to sorrowful men whom she recognized as at once his “brethren” and hers. In short, He draws her away from herself, and all the perils which, for her at least, lay in self-absorption, by giving her a new and great thought, and by giving her some-

thing to do for Him. How could He have more effectually ministered to a mind once diseased, and still dangerously open to disease? or how have shewn a love more wise and tender, more characteristic of Himself?

And what is the lesson of his treatment of Mary Magdalene if it be not this?—To cherish large thoughts, and to engage in active labour for the good of our neighbours, is the true remedy for all undue religious excitement, for all excessive and unwise religious emotion.

As a rule, men, and even Christian men, are in no danger of loving Christ too much, in no danger even of any kind of religious emotion, or excitement, which is perilous to their spiritual sanity and health. Their danger is, rather, that of losing the vigour and freshness of their love for Him, their sense of the amazing change which He has wrought on all the conditions of human life, and of sinking into a cold and unemotional observance of form and routine. But every sincere Christian has some love and reverence for Christ, and for the God whom He reveals. Every Christian has a sense of what he owes to Christ, and of what the world owes to Him, which at times stirs him to emotion. In some poor measure, at least, his thoughts and affections are engaged by the eternal realities in and for which Christ lived, and he is impelled to do some of the things which Christ commanded him. Most of us, I trust, cherish a *strong* sentiment of affection for truth, for righteousness, for Christ, for God, and even for the men whom God is saving by Christ Jesus our Lord. And this wholesome

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sentiment, whatever its form and degree, is always in some danger of sinking into a base sentimentalism ; always in danger, *i.e.*, of attaching itself to that which is poorest and lowest in our faith, instead of rising into that which is highest and noblest ; always in danger of clasping the mere feet or form of Christ, instead of seeking to become of one spirit with Him : always in danger of being content with "touching" that which is visible and external, instead of "ascending" with and through Him to the Father who is in secret.

Christian sentiment is the life of the Church ; Christian sentimentalism its bane. We need to distinguish between the two sharply and clearly, therefore, in order that we may cleave to the one and reject the other. When, then, I perceive a fact, a relation—such, for example, as my relation to sense and time, or my relation to my neighbour, or my relation to God ; when I recognize any such relation as this, and permit it to quicken and release the due emotion within me, when I let it quicken the affection it ought to quicken and yet steadily refuse to let it quicken more than it ought, I am moved by a true and healthy sentiment. But if I permit that sentiment to run loose and carry me away ; if, for instance, I love the mere luxury of emotion and do not care as I ought for the worth of the person or object which excites it ; or if I harp perpetually on one emotional chord and do not care to sound any other ; or if, having found an object worthy of my love, I fail to respond to objects still more worthy,—my sentiment ceases to be healthy ; it sinks into a sentimentalism which is injurious and

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degrading. In short, "sentiment" stands for any pure, healthy, and proportionate emotion ; and "sentimentalism" for any excessive, undue, and unreasonable emotion. While Mary saw in the risen Jesus only a restored friend and teacher, only the rabbi she had known and loved, she did not see all that was in Him, nor even that which was best and highest ; she did not recognize the Victor over death, the Quicken of the spirit, the Saviour of the world. Her passionate emotion was a response, not to that which was highest and noblest in Him, but to that which was visible, transient, and comparatively poor and unsatisfying. She was entranced by the beauty and splendour of the illuminated cloud, and not looking up and through the cloud to the sun which illuminated it. And hence, according to our definition, she was moved by sentimentalism rather than by a pure and healthy sentiment, by an excess of emotion for the more human aspects of her Divine Friend, accompanied, as it was also caused, by an imperfect perception of that in Him which was divine and spiritual and eternal.

And if even she, because she regarded the outward presence of Christ as her supreme good, instead of aiming at that inward and spiritual fellowship which He had promised to as many as loved Him,—if even she needed to be checked and rebuked, how much more must we who, in so many ways, put the body of religion before its vitalizing and animating spirit ! How sorely do we need the admonition, " Do not cleave to, do not lavish and waste yourselves on, that which is least and lowest, but reserve your best and strongest affections for that

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which is best and highest, and therefore most elevating."

As Mary in her adoration, so we in our worship, are in constant danger of attaching ourselves to that which is least worthy and least helpful to us.

Why do many men go to this Church rather than that? and what is it which they most value in the Church to which they go? Often they are influenced in their choice, their choice is often determined, by the mere force of habit and convenience, or by the set of popular opinion, or by the eloquence of the preacher, or by the charms of beautiful structure, fine singing, stately ceremonial; they do not so much as consider what will most promote the health of the soul, where they will be led into larger and more generous views of truth, and be most effectually provoked to good works. They often attach themselves to the outward forms which gratify their æsthetic tastes, or to those sacred shows and rites by which, as they hope, their souls will be saved from death apart from any very grave struggle or effort of their own, or to the creeds to which they can give an easy and careless consent without pledging themselves to more than the average morality.

Yet it needs no recondite or elaborate argument to prove that this addiction to forms and ceremonies is a grave, if not a fatal, mistake. For what is worship for? Its chief end is, surely, to lead us into an ever closer, a more inward and intimate, communion with the Father of our spirits, to bring us ever larger and clearer views of his will, and a stronger impulse to do that will. But if these be

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the chief aims of worship, then it is these which should determine our choice ; it is to these that we should attach ourselves, and not to anything which ~~is~~ simply charms our taste, or ministers to our convenience, or flatters our aversion to moral conflict and endeavour. The sentiment of worship sinks into a base and morbid sentimentalism the very moment that we permit the outward forms and appliances of worship to excite an undue emotion in us, to outweigh the claims of spiritual illumination and intercourse with God. For the health of the soul it is requisite that our emotions should square with the facts, that they should be in proportion to the objects which excite them. And, obviously, he who thinks more of what is easy and congenial in the externals of worship than of that which instructs and refreshes his spirit, is permitting his emotions to be disproportionately excited : he is not holding that to be first and highest which *is* first and highest ; he is not most deeply moved by that which has the best right to move him ; he is giving more thought and affection to the mere body of religion than to its inspiring and animating spirit.

So, again, healthy sentiment degrades into an unhealthy sentimentalism when we are more attached to our own conceptions of truth than to truth itself. Nothing, I suppose, would surprise a bigot more than to be told that he is a sentimentalist. And yet, if undue and excessive emotion be sentimentalism, every bigot is a gross sentimentalist. For he is more zealous for his creed than for religion itself : it is this which makes him a bigot. The forms in which he and his fathers have

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summed up their conceptions of truth are dearer to him than the truth itself, dearer even than obedience to the truth. He will more easily forgive an unjust or an ungenerous—*i.e.*, an irreligious—deed than what he holds to be an erroneous or heretical opinion. And yet he knows very well, or ought to know, that truth is infinite; that no man, however wise and good, can adequately conceive it, much less pack it into a bundle of neat portable formulas. In short, if he think at all, he must be aware that much truth lies outside his creed, outside every creed; and that his duty and ours is to reach forth to wider conceptions of the truth. He knows very well, he must know if he reflect, that right conduct is even more important than accurate conceptions and formulas. Yet he will blaze up in defence of a theological formula far more hotly than for the furtherance of right action. While the ardent pursuit of new and larger views of truth is alien to him, he breathes the fiercest ardour in defending or imposing his creed. That is to say, he is a sentimentalist. He has lost the due sense of proportion. His emotions and affections cleave to that which is least and lowest in the province of religious thought rather than to that which is loftiest and largest. Antique formulas are more to him than the living Spirit of truth presently working in the thoughts of men. A dogma is more to him than a fine action; a doctrine dearer than an inspiration.

*We* may not deserve the name of bigot, and yet we cannot hope that we have altogether escaped this debasing sentimentalism, that we are always and in all things

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square with the facts, that there is no disproportion between our emotions and the objects which excite them. Ask yourselves, my brethren, what it is that you love best in religious worship and thought and action ; and then ask yourselves whether it is always the best that you love best. It may be that you love your very forms of worship mainly because you are used to them, because habit has made them as easy to you as an old coat or a worn glove ; not because they conduct you into the presence-chamber of the Almighty, and bring you into a vital and strengthening fellowship with Him. It may be that what you most love to hear from the pulpit is not thoughts which enlarge and complete your conceptions of truth, nor an earnest summons to a faithful discharge of duty ; but a varied and graceful repetition of conceptions with which you have long been familiar or such an application of them as leaves you content with that whereunto you have already attained. You may be of those whom the inspired Evangelist condemns because they were for ever busying themselves with such rudiments of the Faith as repentance for sin, faith in God, baptism, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment (Heb. vi. 1, 2). There are myriads for whom these very doctrines still comprise the whole Gospel, and who are proud of the fact that they do not care to go beyond them. And it may be that you are touched with their defect. It may be that it is a dead creed which you love rather than the living and growing truth. It may be even that it is a dead Christ whom you worship, and not the living and active Lord of men. It may

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be that, having got so far as the Cross, you do not care to go beyond it, even that you may "ascend" with Christ into the heavenly places and become perfect as your Father is perfect. It may be that, in some form, it is the historic Christ, with all the pathetic memories which cluster round Him, to whom you are looking back, and not the risen Christ, the present Ruler and Saviour of men, to whom you are looking up. Assuredly there are many for whom practically Christ has not left the tomb. They are for ever dwelling on what He did and suffered while He was here, forgetting that He now suffers no more, and that He is acting on a larger scale and with profounder effect than while He wore flesh about Him. They are for ever wasting their hearts on a sacred Image reflected in the glass of history, instead of springing forward to serve a living and present Saviour. Like Mary, they stoop, weeping, over the sepulchre, when they have only to look round and above them to see the Lord.

What, then, is the cure for this weakening and debasing sentimentalism? How may we recover, or preserve, ourselves from it? In his treatment of Mary Magdalene our Lord indicates two ways in which we may either regain health of soul or retain it. He gave her a great truth to think of; and He gave her an important work to do. "I ascend," He said, "to my Father and yours, to my God and yours"—a truth which called off her thoughts from herself to an event of far-reaching issues. And He bade her go and announce this great fact to men who were still sorrowing for Him as dead and gone; *i.e.*,

He made her think of *them*, and sent her to comfort them. And we may be very sure, my brethren, that it is not while our minds are occupied with great impersonal truths, or while we are engaged in serving our fellows—in teaching the ignorant and comforting the sorrowful—that we shall slip into that unhealthy disproportionate attachment to the mere externals of life or worship, to forms and formulas, which has been the bane of the Church. For it is these great governing thoughts which *ought* to occupy us, which ought to excite and release our profoundest emotions. It is these kindly services which in point of fact do kindle, and ought to kindle, our purest and strongest affections.

If, then, you would keep your souls in health, cherish large and generous thoughts; look at all the facts of life and worship in their wider aspects and more catholic relations ; aim at the best and highest both in meditation and action : love most that which is most worthy of your love : and, above all, go about doing good. Thought and action are the indispensable conditions of spiritual sanity, of spiritual growth. Get the best and largest thoughts you can ; do the best and kindest deeds you can ; let Christ be a living Teacher and Lord to you : and your souls must then prosper and be in health.

V.

*THE PSALM OF HEZEKIAH.*

“The writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.

10. I said, in the noontide of my days I must depart into the gates of Hades ;  
I have been mulcted of the residue of my years.
11. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living :  
I shall behold man no more, with the inhabitants of the world..
12. My habitation is plucked up and carried off from me like a shepherd’s tent ;  
I have rolled up, like a weaver, my life : He will cut me off from the loom :  
In a day and a night Thou wilt make an end of me.
13. I thought until morning, As a lion so will He break all my bones ;  
In a day and a night Thou wilt make an end of me.
14. Like a swallow, like a crane, did I scream ;  
I did moan as a dove ; mine eyes looked hopelessly toward the height :  
O Lord, I am hard pressed ; be Thou my surety.
15. What shall I say ? He hath both promised me, and performed :  
I shall walk as in state through all my years in spite of the bitterness of my soul.
16. O Lord, by such things as these men live,  
And in them is the whole life of my spirit :  
So wilt Thou recover me and make me to live.

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17. Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness :  
And Thou hast loved back my soul from the pit of destruction :  
For Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

18. For Hades cannot give thanks to Thee, Death cannot praise Thee ;  
They that go down to the grave cannot hope to see thy faithfulness.

19. The living, the living, he can praise Thee, as I do this day ;  
The father to the children shall make known thy faithfulness.

20. The Lord is ready to save me ; and my stringed instruments will we strike  
All the days of our life in the house of the Lord."

ISAIAH xxxviii. 9-20.

HEZEKIAH was a good man. Good thoughts stirred within him as he lay on his bed with his face turned to the wall. He was a good man ; the approach of death forced him to look on life in its highest aspects, under its more solemn and spiritual hues. He may have been moved, though we are not told that he was inoved, by the Divine Spirit, no less than by his own cultivated taste, to express his thoughts in a poetic form. And the Bible, which finds room for so much that we could hardly have expected to read in it, has found a place for his "writing," or song,—"a song in the night" we may well call it, since very obviously the night has got into his song.

Hezekiah was a good man ; he had good thoughts ; these thoughts are in the Bible. But does it therefore follow that his song is, in the highest sense, inspired ? that it is a revelation of essential and eternal truth ? Must we listen to it as to the voice of God ? *The Bible* does not tell us that it is the voice of God which we hear

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in this plaintive song ; but that it is the voice of Hezekiah. It does not affirm it to be a scripture of the Divine Wisdom, but the "writing" of a sick man. All that it professes to do is to give us the very words which Hezekiah wrote, the very thoughts that passed through his mind when he was in bondage to the fear of death. And we must be careful not to claim for this writing more than the Bible claims for it, not to attribute any greater weight to it than the Bible attributes: for, though it helps us to understand Hezekiah's character and to comprehend his range of spiritual thought and emotion, it would be simply a fatal mistake were we to take him for our spiritual teacher and guide, or to accept his words as an adequate expression of our faith and hope. *He* saw no light of life and promise in the Hadean world. He could hear no song of praise in the region beyond the grave. He had no hope of finding Jehovah except "in the land of the living." "Hades cannot give thanks," he cries ; "Death cannot praise Thee ; they that go down to the grave cannot hope to see thy faithfulness." But *we*, for whom Christ has brought life and immortality to light, we know that the vast Hadean world rings and resounds with praise, that those who are dead to us live unto God, that men go down into the grave that they may go up into heaven. We hope that Hezekiah is himself in the true land of life to-day, and praises God in nobler strains than he could reach on earth.

Obviously, then, we cannot take Hezekiah for our spiritual teacher and guide, nor accept his song as an

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adequate expression of spiritual facts and truths. We can take it only as an authentic expression of *his* view of the facts of life and death, and of his personal relation to those facts. We are as free to form our own conclusion on his views as though we had found his psalm in any other book than the Bible. All that the Bible affirms about it is, that he wrote it, that it is *his*.

Let us look at his Writing for ourselves, then, holding it to be precious, because it is a genuine utterance of human thought and passion ; but not holding ourselves bound to adopt it as a fitting utterance of the thought and passion which the sacred realities of life and death should quicken in our souls, nor saddling upon the Bible the errors and sick forebodings of a man who, even in his prime, was not exceptionally wise or strong.

Hezekiah was a man who loved poetry rather than a poet, a man who lacked creative genius, though he possessed "the accomplishment of verse." He restored the choral liturgies to the service of the Temple (2 Chronicles xxix. 30). He set his "men," *i.e.*, his scholars and scribes, to collect psalms and proverbs which lived only in the stammering and uncertain mouth of tradition. It is to "the men of Hezekiah" that we owe five chapters of the Book of Proverbs (Chaps. xxv.-xxix.). To them we also owe, in all probability, two—*viz.*, the third and the fourth—books of the Psalter. But with all his love of poetic rhythm and measure, Hezekiah seems to have lacked the true poetic fire. All the great critics affirm that his Psalm shews cultivated taste rather than original genius ; that it is full of echoes and reminiscences of the earlier

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and great poets of Israel. Kings, like poets, are born, not made ; but a man may be born a king, without being a born poet. In a king it is perhaps enough that he should love poetry, without also making it.

But what of the matter, what of the substance, of the Psalm ? What had Hezekiah really to say to his fellows when he came back from the gates of Death ?

He had this to say :—that, to him, those gates looked very grim and forbidding ; that he held it to be an irreparable calamity to be cut off in the meridian of his days, since he could no longer hope to see God when he had left the land of the living. He dwells pathetically on all he had nearly lost,—his habitation, *i.e.*, probably his “house of flesh” plucked up and carried away as if it had been nothing more than a shepherd’s tent ; his life, which promised to be of so fair a pattern, and of which he had taken such anxious care lest it should be damaged or soiled, cut off from the loom like an unfinished web. He remembers how for a day and a night, which he never thought to survive, God sprang upon him, shook him with pang on pang, till he felt as if all his bones were broken : how he pined for the heights on which sat health and deliverance ; and how, under the hopeless misery, he shrieked like a swift or moaned like a dove. When at last God lifts him to the heights he had despaired of reaching, he overflows with gratitude, elation, and good resolves. He owes his life simply to the Divine compassion, which has given him health for anguish, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Henceforth he will walk before God as one

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who takes part in a solemn festive procession. His recovery is a proof that God has cast all his sins behind his back. And therefore he will give thanks to Him as long as he lives.

This is the main substance of his song. And, as we listen to it, we can hardly fail, at least in certain moods, to be touched by its plaintive cadences, its expressive figures, and the almost feminine despondency and submission it breathes. But, surely, there are other and higher moods in which we a little wonder that a brave man should have cherished so craven a fear of death ; in which, if we are touched by the dainty pathos of his self-pitying song, we are also moved to some astonishment and contempt for a weakness which looks unkingly, and even unmanly. "Here is a mature man," we are tempted to say, "as timid as a girl, whining and puling over the inevitable instead of bracing himself to encounter it ! What is there in this life, after all, that a man should greatly mourn its loss ? What, after all, is there in death, that he should fear to meet it ? Nevermore behold man, nor the inhabitants of the world ! Why should he care to behold them any more ? Had he lived so many years without discovering how poor and base are all the uses of this world ? Might he not have been content to lie down and sleep after life's fitful fever, to fling off existence like a disease ? Nay, ought he not to have been thankful to be early delivered out of the miseries of this sinful world ?"

Even his despair of a life beyond the grave does not adequately account for the mortal tremors which shake his

disposition as he looks on death. Many a man for whom no light of hope burned in the darkness of the sepulchre has gone calmly, and even gaily, to a premature and violent end. And, beyond question, Hezekiah shrank from death with a strange dread, and "wept exceedingly" at the mere prospect of it. Perhaps his fear sprang from a deeper sense of sin than the heathen knew. Perhaps he dimly conceived of a *death* beyond the grave, though he could see no life there. Or perhaps he was not a brave man in our sense of the word "brave," or a great man in our sense of the word "great." And, indeed, I cannot but think that the Scripture story of his life and reign conveys the impression that, while he was capable of a great deed now and then, Hezekiah was not really a man of the heroic type. To me he appears to have had one of those sensitive and impressionable temperaments which, while they render a man very susceptible to fine impulses and noble aims, are apt to leave him too much at the mercy of gloomy imaginations and fears, to make him self-regarding, apprehensive, despondent. When the message came to him through the Prophet, "After you the deluge!" Hezekiah said first, "Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken"; and we might have inferred that he had risen to an heroic pitch of faith, had he not added with a sigh of satisfaction and relief, "There will be peace and truth in *my* days," as if, so that he had quiet times, he cared little for those who should come after him.<sup>1</sup> Good man as he was, and admirable in his endeavour to

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xxxix. 5-8.

reform the national worship and morals, I am afraid we must grant that he was a little selfish, a little timid, a little weak.

But whatever doubt of him his fear of death may breed in us, we cannot doubt that *our* fear of death, at least to the extent to which we often carry it, is simply shameful to us and a disgrace. If we accept Hezekiah's psalm—and you will often hear it thus spoken of—as a plaintive and exquisite expression of the emotions with which we are penetrated by the prospect of death, what possible right can we have to the Christian name? Has not Christ conquered death? Do not we know that Hades can praise God, that the dead do celebrate Him, and that "the nations of the saved" dwell in a world which has no temple simply because it is itself the temple of the universe, and join in a chorus of thanksgiving which for ever beats and breaks, like the sound of many waters, on the steps of the eternal throne? Can we allege even a single decent excuse for that fear of death which hath torment, and to which many of us go all our life long in bondage, whether we fear it for ourselves or for our friends? Has that fear any other origin or ground than our mere lack of faith? Does it not spring solely from the fact that we do not heartily believe in the Victor over death, who gave the assurance of his victory in that he poured out his Spirit, and the gifts of his Spirit, on the very men who had crucified and slain Him?

And yet, see! we stand by every open grave, and give God thanks that it has pleased Him of his great

mercy to deliver this our brother, or this our sister, out of the miseries of this sinful world ; we beseech Him to hasten his kingdom, and shortly to accomplish the number of his elect. And then, to shew how heartily thankful we are, we go away from the grave to weep, and, sometimes, to conclude that we have nothing left worth living for ! So anxious are we that God should hasten his kingdom, that we bemoan every addition He makes to it ! We beseech Him to accomplish the number of his elect ; but it must not be out of our circle : should He call us, or our dear ones, to Himself, we too shriek like the swallow or moan like the dove, and deem Him austere and unkind because He has answered our prayer and granted our request !

What does this fatal contradiction between our own words and our actions imply ? Are we rank hypocrites ? is our burial service a lie ? No, it is not that. It is, rather, that we do not reflect ; that we do not believe. Our words cover a surface which our faith does not quicken and inform. Heaven is not so real to us as earth, nor eternity as time, nor God as man. No one of us would admit in words that it is better to be on earth than in heaven, to be clothed with "this muddy vesture of decay" than to put on incorruption. And yet how commonly we dread the change from earth to heaven, or mourn that our friends should have become "pure heavenly" !

There is no righting this wrong save by more faith, by a faith more genuine, more vital, more pregnant with the forces of spiritual imagination and hope. Turn the

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fact how we will, put it in what light we may, plead for it whatever excuse we can, we must still acknowledge that our fear of death proves we have not risen to the peace of the Christian faith and hope. If we really believed in "the life everlasting," we should meet it with a glad thanksgiving, and bury our dead out of our sight, not with tears and sighs, and the grotesque trappings of our funeral woe, but with bright and heartfelt songs of praise.

What is it that we fear? What can there be for faith to fear?

Some man will say, perhaps: "It is not that which follows death that I dread, but the act and article of dying. And is not that terrible to flesh and blood? Does not our very nature, through all its instincts, shrink from and abhor the pangs of dissolution?"

Surely: to sense, to flesh and blood, pain must be dreadful; and of all pains perhaps that of dissolution most affects the imagination, most daunts and saddens it. But we are of those who profess to walk after the spirit, and not after the flesh; by faith, not by sight. And is it not the very task of faith to rule the imagination, to conquer sense and sense-born misgivings and fears? Who is it that appoints the time and manner of our death, and metes out all our pains? Is it not God—the God who, as we profess to believe, does all things well, and compels all things, since all are his servants, to minister to our good? If we honestly believe in Him, in his wise goodness and tender mercy, what room is left for fear? Why do we apprehend a danger in

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death which He will not enable us to surmount, or a pain which will not be swallowed up in love and victory?

Another man objects: "It is not the mere pain of dying that I fear. But is there nothing in the thought that I must leave this life with which I am so familiar, and go forth, solitary and alone, on a path shrouded in darkness, past the bourne from which no traveller returns, and enter on a mode of existence all whose conditions will be new and strange to me? It is the solitude, the darkness, the mystery of death which appal me, and from which I shrink."

But why should you be alone? How can you be alone if God be with you? And has not at least one Man returned from that bourne which all must pass, returned to assure us that beyond it there lies a broad and wealthy land of life and peace and joy? How can the eternal world be altogether strange to you if you have long been a denizen of it, if you have long enjoyed fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ whom He has sent: if many of its oldest and most eminent inhabitants—as Moses, David, Isaiah, Paul, John, Peter—are more inwardly and truly known to you than the neighbours whose hands you grasp and into whose eyes you look for answering looks of love? How can the life to come be unfamiliar to any man who has known love, hope, joy, peace in the Holy Ghost? It is mere unbelief to take up these stock phrases, which you have too often heard from Christian lips. It is mere unbelief which depicts death as a dark mystery, a solitary

path, a gloomy and perilous passage to an unknown world. To faith, death is a mere transition from a life all fretted with imperfection and harassed with restraints, to the large freedom of that perfect life which we already know in part, and of which surely every faithful soul must know enough to make him long for more.

There are still others whom faith has delivered from fear whether of the pain of dying or of the mystery of death, but who, nevertheless, feel that were death to come to them as it came to Hezekiah, come, at the meridian of their days, to cut off the residue of their years, to remove an unfinished web from the loom of life, they should meet it with a reluctance bordering on terror. The thought of an incomplete life, of leaving an unfinished work, has embittered many a dying bed. But does not even this bitterness spring from want of faith? If *we* are compelled to lift our hand from any useful task, cannot God find other hands to complete it for us, and even to finish what we had begun with a skill and a success beyond any which we could command? Cannot He also find us still better work to do for Him in the world to which we go? "The universe is his," we say; "his providence embraces all worlds. Our whole life is ruled by Him, and ruled for larger ends than we can grasp." But if we honestly believe what we say, must we not admit that He keeps us here as long as He needs us for the accomplishment of his designs, and only takes us to the better world when He needs us there? Dare we pit our wisdom against his, our desires against the large

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purpose of his love, or change our place when He calls us to go up higher with sighs of reluctance and fear?

But perhaps some man will say: "It is not for myself that I fear; it is not for myself. But I must leave my wife and my children behind me; and I have not been able to make any provision for them. How can I bear to leave them alone and unprotected, or to commit them to the harsh care of an indifferent world?"

Truly, my friend, you cannot bear it, unless you have the full courage of your convictions, unless God shed the full strength and force of faith into your troubled heart. Hezekiah's heaviest grief seems to have been that he left no child, no heir to his throne, no successor to carry his name honourably down the stream of time: but, surely, yours is by far the harder case. Every humane man must have had his very heart-strings wrung as he has stood beside the dying bed of a father, worn out before his time with excessive care and toil, and has seen the despairing looks cast on wife and children about to be thrown on the rough compassion of a thoughtless world, and has heard the tremulous pitiful appeal, "What is to become of them when I am gone?" One's lips tremble and stammer as one tries to frame some word of comfort for such a despair as this. And yet—it must be said, for it is true—even this despair springs from unbelief, and from unbelief in the very rudiments of the Christian creed. What do we mean by faith in the kind providence of Him who is the Husband of the widow and the Father of the fatherless? That He can take care of wife and children *if we are there to help Him*, but cannot

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take care of them should He call us away? He forgets nothing, neglects nothing. Will he forget or neglect those who have none to care for them but Him? Ah, see, how faithless we are! how our sorest pangs spring from our unbelief!

Finally, there are those who do not fear death for themselves, but their hearts are inexpressibly sad and disquieted within them when death robs them of their friends. And some such man may say: "I have lost one who was dearer to me than my own life. Is not that hard? Has faith any compensation for such a loss as that?"

Ah, Sir, we reply, it is hard; it is very hard. Nevertheless faith is of so divine a quality that it can heal even your wound, and change your loss to gain. For faith assures us that those who die in the Lord *live* in the Lord, live with Him in an unbroken communion of love and service. *Did* you love those whom He has taken to Himself better than your own soul? And is your love of so poor a strain that, for your own comfort or delight, you would have held them back from the joy unspeakable and full of glory? You have no right to weep for them, if you can weep for them as though you had no compensation for your loss in their gain. You did not love them so well as you think if you can regret that they have exchanged the fetters of sense and toil for the large freedom of a heavenly service and rest. And why should you mourn for yourself? If you would have made any sacrifice for their sakes, as you sometimes boast, and made it cheerfully, why not make the sacrifice

which God demands of you, and cheerfully let them go to the world in which their welfare is beyond the reach of assault or change? Has your love turned to selfishness that you weep for them as though they had been lost?

That last phrase, that last word, *lost*, suggests the very sting of death. Faith can conquer all other fears; but can it sustain us under the dread that, of those who have been rent from us, some may have wandered into the outer darkness? Most of us, I suppose, have stood dumb with misery, by the grave of one whose reckless death, following a wild sinful life, gave little hope—perhaps, no hope—that we should ever meet him again. God save us all from this misery; for there is none like it. But can it be that in the keenest misery of all faith has no word of comfort to utter, no succour of hope to impart?

No, it cannot be. Faith does not lift the veil; but it shews us a light burning beyond the veil. It does not promise us that this sinner, or that, shall be saved; but it does point to a Sacrifice which taketh away the sin of the world, and to a Love which seeks that which is lost until it find it. It does bid us trust in a compassion far more tender and enduring than our own. If *our* hearts are sore even for the impenitent, is not God's heart larger and kinder than ours? If our love would make any sacrifice to save those whom we hold dear, what must that eternal Love be, and be capable of doing, from which our love springs? Let us hope in God. Why should we fear or distrust Him, whatever

He may do? May we not be sure that, in every case,  
He will do that which is kindest and best?

The world calls no man brave who cannot face death  
calmly. Let us call no Christian brave who cannot  
meet it with a smile and a thanksgiving. We may be  
quite sure that faith has not had its perfect work in us  
if we are in bondage to any fear of death, whether for  
others or for ourselves.

## VI.

### *THE SECRET OF JONAH.*

“ And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I beseech thee, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish ; for I knew that thou art a gracious God and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, and repentest thee of the evil.”—JONAH iv. 2.

IN this Verse we have, though I am not aware that it has ever been pointed out, the key to the whole book of Jonah ; the secret, the motive, both of his character and of his mission.

God had sent the Prophet to Nineveh, to threaten the inhabitants of that wicked city with the doom due to their sins, to warn them that sentence had gone forth against them, and that it was to be executed forthwith. “ God does not always pay on Saturdays,” says an old proverb ; but sooner or later He pays every man, and every race, the wages they have earned. When the Ninevites were convinced that pay-day had really come at last, that they were about to receive the wages of their iniquity, they repented and turned every one from his evil way. And when they repented of the evil they had done, “ God repented of the evil He had said

He would do unto them ;" when they turned from the violence that was in their hands, God turned from his fierce anger against them (Chap. iii., Vers. 9, 10). That is to say, when they were no longer sinners, they were no longer to be treated as sinners. Space for repentance, and for bringing forth fruit meet for repentance, was accorded them by Him who deals with men according to what they are, as well as according to what they were ; by Him who "sees the future in the instant," and therefore deals with men according to what they will be, as well as according to what they are. Pay-day was postponed that, if they would, they might earn a very different wage to that which they had provoked. For God, if an exact, is also a most generous paymaster, and is ever on the watch to pay men the best wages they can earn : nay, He is a Father as well as a Paymaster, and cannot deal with his children as if they were only labourers serving Him for hire. His grace, as well as their works, must enter into the final account ; and every man's reward will correspond to the Father's love even more closely than to the children's desert.

But when, and because, God was no longer angry, Jonah became very angry. That God should "turn away from the evil" He had threatened against Nineveh was itself an evil, and a great evil, to him,<sup>1</sup>—so unlike may men of God be to the God whom they serve. Jonah was angry ; and in his anger "he prayed unto the Lord :"

<sup>1</sup> The literal rendering of the first clause of Chapter iv. (A. V., "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly," &c.) is, "But it was evil to Jonah, a great evil."

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and in his prayer he let out the secret of his anger, and indeed of the whole story.

Now an angry man may certainly do worse than pray. But if his prayer shew that he is angry with God, and angry with Him because God's mercy is wider than his own, because

The love of God is broader  
Than the measures of man's mind,  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind,—

can he do much worse than pray such a prayer as that ? Alas, those religious men who would fain cut God down into their own image, and who are angry if they suspect that his thoughts are as high above theirs as the heavens are above the earth, and that the ways of his compassion stretch as far beyond their ways as the East from the West, are the worst foes of religion, and betray a most irreligious spirit. Better be “a pagan suckled in a creed outworn” than a Christian who has not learned that “there’s a wideness in God’s mercy like the wideness of the sea.”

Jonah was angry with God not only because God’s mercy was shewn to be wider than his own ; but also and mainly—and here his miserable secret comes out—because he had always known that it would be ! “I beseech thee, O Lord, was not this my saying *when I was yet in my country ? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish* : for *I knew* that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.” On his own confession, there-

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fore, Jonah's reluctance to undertake the mission to which he was called did not spring, as some have supposed, from fear of what the fierce and cruel Assyrians might do to him. Nor did it spring, as others have supposed, from the jealous pride of a Jew unwilling to believe that God cared for any but the elect people. It sprang, rather, from his fear of God's mercy, his knowledge of God's humanity. What he was really afraid of was that God would be too kind to keep his word. Jonah's character and reputation were at stake, or so he thought. He knew God well enough to anticipate that He would both quicken repentance in the heart of the Ninevites, and forgive their sins so soon as they repented of them. And if they were forgiven, instead of destroyed, why, then, he, Jonah, would be made to look like a fool,—a prophet who could not read the omens, nor forecast the future, nor interpret the Voice which spake within his heart. An unverified prediction—especially on an occasion so public and momentous—would damage his reputation as a seer, and might be fatal to it. And hence he both strove to evade the task on which he was sent; and when God proved to be as good and gracious as he feared, he grew very angry, so angry as to feel that it would be better for him to die than to live, and to beseech God to take away his life.

There is no need, however, to insist that Jonah had no other motive than this. Human nature is so complex that men rarely act from a single motive. And it may be, as Calvin says, that his jealousy for his own reputation as a prophet was blended with jealousy for the

honour of God, whose honour would seem to be compromised if the word which Jonah had spoken were not fulfilled. It may be—as the last and one of the best commentators on this Book maintains<sup>1</sup>—that it was still further complicated by Jonah's displeasure at the extension of the mercy of God to the Gentiles. But I do not see how we are to escape the conclusion that, whatever other motives we admit, his main sin was a want of pity for his fellows, an egotism so profound as to move him, a sinful man, to reproach God for his grace to man. His attempt to evade the mission on which he was sent, and the reason he assigns for that evasion, his anger against God for not destroying the Ninevites and for destroying the gourd which sheltered *him* from the heat, all point in one direction and seem to render that conclusion inevitable.

Even if that conclusion should be dubious to us, we cannot doubt—for has not he himself told us so?—that Jonah was angry with God for the very reason which should most of all have induced him to love Him—because he knew God to be gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.

But that phrase—“Has not he himself told us so?”—suggests the only satisfactory reply to a question which cannot but rise in our minds as we read this Scripture, and observe that while the God to whom he prays is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, he who utters the prayer is ungracious and uncompassionate, quick to anger and without

<sup>1</sup> Archdeacon Perowne in *The Cambridge Bible for Schools*.

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mercy. For we cannot but ask, How should such a man as this be a man of God at all? What claim has one so selfish, of a mind so narrow and a heart so cold, to be ranked in the goodly fellowship of the prophets? And the answer is, "Who told us all we know about him? who could have told us of all those inward motions of his soul but he himself?" And if he records his sins for our instruction, must it not be because he has repented of his sins? If he tells us how God taught him what he needed to know in order that he might become a true prophet and man of God, may we not be sure that he had learned his lesson, and would fain have us learn it too? He may have needed to be taught that God cares for the heathen as much as the Jew, and only elects the Jew for the sake of the heathen; just as many now need to learn that God chooses a church out of the world in order that the world may be saved. He may have needed to be taught to rejoice that "there's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea"; just as many still need to learn that God threatens in order that He may not strike, and rebukes in order that He may redeem. Or he may have needed to learn, as many a dealer in damnation has yet to learn, that the prophet's mission is then most truly fulfilled when his word is a savour of life unto life, and not of death unto death. Probably he needed to learn *all* these lessons before he could be fully equipped for the prophetic vocation. But, surely, we may hope that he had learned them when he wrote this confession of his errors and transgressions, and told us, for our instruction, by what a poignant dis-

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cipline he was delivered from them, and brought to serve God with all his heart and to love his neighbour as himself.

This Scripture, I have said, was written for our teaching. Have we, then, mastered its main lesson? Do we believe that God loves all men without distinction of race or creed, and willeth not that any should perish, but that all should turn to Him? Do we fully and gladly believe, without any touch of doubt, much less any taint of anger or regret, that his mercy is more than all our sins, more even than the sins of the whole world, capable of blotting them all out, of taking them all away? It may be questioned. We have been taught, indeed, as Jonah was never taught, that God is love. And if anything could persuade us of that supreme fact it would be the revelation of that love in the life, sacrifice, and teaching of Jesus Christ his Son. We profess to believe that revelation. In some sense, I suppose, we do believe it; for if we were asked to define God, we should instinctively fall back on St. John's definition, and reply, "God is love." And yet, do we believe it as we should, whether for ourselves or for the world at large?

You even who have so learned Christ as that you cherish the most generous hopes for the world around you, do you honestly and habitually believe that God has forgiven *your* sins, and saved *you* unto life eternal? Do you never doubt it? Do you ever do more than "faintly trust" that it may be true? Do you never set those sentences in the Gospel which reveal his anger

against all iniquity over against those which reveal the mercy that "frees all faults" and forgives all transgressions, and strike a balance between them which yields at least as much warrant for your fears as for your hopes? Do you never treat the love of God as though it were simply one of his attributes, instead of the very substance of his being, and play off his other attributes against it? Do you never argue, "God is love, but then He is just; and if his love move Him to forgive, his justice compels Him to condemn me," instead of arguing, "God *is* love, and therefore his justice must be consistent with his love, or therefore his love must be a true and just love"? Do you never argue, "God is omniscient and sees all my sins, sees sins even where I fail to detect them"; instead of arguing, "God *is* love, and therefore his love must be an omniscient love, able to foresee all my errors, to pardon all my faults, to guard and save me in all my ways"? Do you never argue, "If God is my Father, He is also the almighty Ruler and Judge of the universe; and though as a Father He might forgive my trespasses, as a Ruler He must punish me for them"; instead of arguing, "God *is* love, and because He is the almighty Ruler of the universe, his love must be universal and almighty, able to cope with all my sins, and to convert the very punishments of sin into a discipline of holiness"?

*Do* you believe that the mercy of God is wide as the world? Do you cherish the hope that He will prove Himself to be gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy to all men, to heathen as

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well as to Hebrew, to Christian and to those who never heard the name of Christ? Then you have no more right to despair of and condemn yourselves than you have to condemn or despair of the world. You are part of the world. The world is made up of such as you. There are many in it who do not crave forgiveness and strive for amendment as you do. How, then, can the mercy which is for all, and upon all, be withheld from you? or why should it fail to deliver you out of the hand of your iniquities and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness?

But there are others who, if they never doubt God's mercy for themselves, utterly disbelieve that that Mercy, in any efficient sense, embraces the whole world. There are even those among us who grow angry with as many as pity the Ninevites and sinners of the world, if at least they believe and teach that God pities them more, and more effectually, than they do, and will repent Him of the evil He has *said* that He would do. Like Jonah, they may be jealous for the honour of God, but they are also jealous for their own standing as saints or their own reputation as prophets and teachers. Nay, they are angry without even Jonah's excuse for anger; for they cannot say that they always knew God to be better than they would have Him be. They have never thought nobly of God, but have rather conceived of Him as altogether such an one as themselves. No hope, however "large," should be *unwelcome* to a merciful man who believes in a God infinitely more merciful than himself. Even though he be unable to entertain it, it

should not make him angry. And yet how many speak as if they would suffer myriads of their fellows to perish rather than have their sense of security impaired, or be compelled to reconsider their conception of the Father of all mercies, the God of all grace !

They are better than they know, even as God is better than they believe. Nothing would shock them more than to *see* their predictions fulfilled. It is because they do not *see*, that they believe as they do. It did not take the destruction of Nineveh to convince Jonah how foolish and wicked he had been. The destruction of a single gourd, a few hours' exposure to the burning heat of the sun, sufficed to teach him his lesson. And some faint touch of the misery to which we so easily condemn our fellows may be the means by which we shall be rebuked for our lack of thought and pity for them, and be taught to rejoice that the grace and mercy of God are so much wider than our own.

For, my brethren, we should miss the very moral of this story were we to conclude that *we* are merciful, simply because we trust in a larger Mercy than some of our neighbours. There is a taint of Jonah's selfish jealousy in us all, of his indifference to the fate of others so that our comfort, our salvation, our security be assured. The better we are, and the better we know ourselves, the more eager shall we be to modify Jonah's prayer, and to cry, "I beseech Thee, O Lord, *make* me to know that Thou art a gracious God and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, and repentest Thee of the evil." None of *our* neighbours

can be more sinful than were the Ninevites. Against none of them can the doom of destruction have been more absolutely pronounced. And if God should answer our prayer, we may be able both to believe, and to rejoice in the belief, that when they see destruction coming upon them, or when the Voice of God for the first time really reaches them, or when some prophet is sent them, whether in this world or in the world to come, God may touch their hearts with repentance, and "repent of the evil He had said He would do unto them; and do it not."

## VII.

### *FRIEND, GO UP HIGHER.*

“And he spake a parable to those who were bidden, when he marked how they chose the chief seats ; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding feast, sit not down in the chief seat ; lest haply a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him, and he that bade thee and him shall come and say to thee, Give this man place, and then thou shalt begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place ; that when he that hath bidden thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher : then shalt thou have honour in the presence of all that sit at meat with thee. For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—LUKE xiv. 7-11.

DURING a ministry extending over nearly forty years, I have never ventured to speak on this parable. And I have not spoken of it because I had nothing to say, or nothing that seemed worth saying. Like most of you, I had been taught to regard it as a counsel of prudence, and of a somewhat worldly prudence, rather than as a counsel of perfection ; and as most men are quite prudent enough already, and far too worldly, it hardly seemed worth while to invite them to cherish a self-regarding and calculating spirit.

Yet this is what the Parable, as it is commonly read,

appears to do, and even as it is read by some of our best commentators. They see the danger of so reading it. They admit that it appeals to lower motives than those to which our Lord was wont to appeal, lower even than those by which the disciples of Christ should regulate their lives. They confess that, thus read, the Parable enforces an artificial rather than a real humility, that it even makes an affected humility the cloak and stalking-horse of a selfish ambition which is only too real and perilous. But they plead (1) that "all precepts bearing directly on social ethics start naturally, as in the Book of Proverbs, from the prudential rather than from the spiritual view of human life,"—which sounds dangerously like an admission that we must expect no higher social ethics from Christ than from Solomon. They plead (2) that in this Parable our Lord is adapting Himself to the infirmities of those who listened to Him, to the hardness of their hearts; and that there is a touch of grave irony in his words, as if He would remind them that, poor and low as were the aims they pursued, they did not go about them in the right way, but were losing the substance while grasping at the shadow, and failing to get, or failing to retain, the personal distinction at which they clutched. And they plead (3) that, even thus read the Parable teaches "the deep ethical truth, that every victory obtained over a dominant weakness, however low the motive by which it is gained, strengthens the habit of self-control, and that the power thus developed tends in the nature of things to go on to further and further victories."

These three pleas are advanced in one of the best and latest commentaries,<sup>1</sup> written by a scholar of whom I can never think save with affectionate respect. But if nothing more can be said for the Parable than he has said, you will not, I am sure, wonder why I have hitherto passed it by. For what these pleas really come to is, that, when our Lord was speaking to men who eagerly grasped at the best places, seats of honour, at feasts and in synagogues, all he had to give them was some ironic advice on the best way of securing that paltry end, in the hope that, if they learned not to *snatch* at what they desired, they might by and bye come to desire something higher and better. Is that like Him? Do you recognize his manner, his spirit, in it? Can you possibly be content with such an interpretation of his words as this?

Why, even if we take the Parable simply as a counsel of prudence, there is surely, considering the lips from which it fell, much more in it than we have yet heard. Why may we not take it as enjoining a *genuine* and unaffected humility; as teaching that the only distinction which deserves a thought is that which is freely bestowed on men of a lowly and a kindly spirit? Why may we not take it as setting forth a truth which experience abundantly confirms, *viz.*, that even the most worldly and selfish of men have a sincere respect for the unworldly; that the only men whom they can bear to see preferred before themselves are those who are of a spirit so gentle and sweet and unselfish as not to grasp at any such preference or distinction? Even the world

<sup>1</sup> Cassell's New Testament Commentary for English Readers.

meets us in very much the same spirit that we take to it. If we push men out of our way, they push back ; if we plot and strive against them, they strive and plot against us : whereas if we shew ourselves friendly, they are not unwilling to be our friends ; if we are unaffectedly meek and pure, they honour us for virtues which they may not themselves possess.

Half the fret and misery of our lives spring from the exaggerated estimate of ourselves which we cherish, the exorbitant demands we make on our neighbours, on their admiration, their sympathy, their help, from the selfish and imperious temper which claims an authority and distinction it has done little to deserve. When, therefore, we encounter men and women of a lowly, contented, and amiable spirit, who are at leisure from themselves, who do not want to stand first, or to be in any way conspicuous in the society in which they move ; who feel the responsibilities of authority and place too deeply to covet them ; who would like to slip through life unobserved, and yet will not suffer any opportunity of helping and serving a neighbour to pass by unused,—these sweet-minded, gentle-hearted, quiet-spirited people take us by surprise, and win upon us the more we know them. We do not grudge them any honour that may be thrust upon them ; we are forward to do them honour ; or, at the worst, we would rather see them go before and rise above us than men as vain and worldly and selfish as ourselves. No one takes pleasure in seeing promotion or distinction come to those who, though no richer, want to seem richer, than others ; though no wiser, want to seem wiser ;

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though no better, give themselves all the airs of superior merit, and are for ever trying to sit down in a higher seat than falls fairly to their share. It is only when those who, in their lowliness or kindliness or their desire to serve, voluntarily take a lower place at the feast of life than that to which we think them entitled—it is only when *they* hear the command, “Friend, come up higher,” that all men, even the most selfish, can take some degree of pleasure in their exaltation, and all generous men a very high degree of pleasure.

Taken simply as a counsel of prudence, then, there is a very good meaning in this Parable, if only we assume, as surely we are bound to do, both that our Lord was speaking sincerely, and that He was speaking of the sincere.

But may we not also take it as a counsel of perfection? There are other commentators who tell us that we may, and even that we must, since every parable must have “a religious sense and a spiritual application”; though even these, so far as my reading goes, find nothing more in it than a lesson of genuine humility.

That is a lesson, however, which I should be very sorry to disparage. It is almost as much needed in the Church as in the world. For we do not change our natural temperament, nor sometimes, it would seem, our natural *tempers*, when we pass through the change of heart, the renewal of nature, the conversion, which fits us for the Christian fellowship. Some of us, indeed, make little effort to change them. I have heard men who had been for many years conspicuous members of

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the Church talk of "having a temper" much as other men talk of keeping a dog, and bewailing themselves as if their temper was not a part of themselves, but, like the dog, had an independent existence. Such men seem to forget that even a dog, if it be a bad dog, dangerous or a nuisance to the neighbours, has to be got rid of. And if men are held responsible for the dogs, how much more for the tempers, they keep about them? A good man has no more right to a bad temper than he has to anything else which is bad. The lusts of anger, malice, and easily offended vanity, are as much forbidden in the Church as any other lusts; and he is no true member of Christ who is not habitually striving to subdue and cast them out.

Nevertheless, in the Church, as well as in the world, we still find men and women of a forward pushing spirit, a selfish and conceited temperament, who covet earnestly the best seat rather than the best gifts, and the first place rather than the prime virtues; who never doubt that, let others be where they will, *they* are entitled to "sit down in the highest room"; who are ambitious, not to serve, but to rule; who are so much of their own opinion that they think themselves always in the right, and are quick to take offence if their opinion is not deferred to and they are not allowed to have their own way. And, curiously enough, those who put so high a value on themselves and their opinions, while they may have many good qualities—much energy, for instance, much kindness even for their *inferiors*, who acknowledge their inferiority—are not as a rule those who have read much

or thought much, or travelled much and seen many forms of life. It is the comparatively ignorant who are most deeply convinced of their own wisdom. It is the homekeeping and narrow mind which is most sure that it is always in the right. It is those who have the least in which to trust who trust in themselves. It is those who would cut a very poor figure in the highest place who are most eager to assume it. It is those who are most incompetent to rule who are most ambitious of rule, most vexed and incensed if they are not suffered to rule. What they most need, then, is to hear a Voice, whose authority they cannot contest, which bids them take a lower place, both in the Church, and in their own conceit, than that which, on very slender evidence, they have assumed to be their due. The very shame with which they begin to take a lower room, where they will really be more at home after a while, may be a saving shame ; it may prove to be "the low beginnings of content," the germ of that humility which leads to honour. And, in that case, their abasement will be the first step in their exaltation.

On the other hand, we, happily, find many men and women in the Church who are either naturally of a meek and quiet spirit, or who, by the grace of God, have so far tamed and subdued their natural self-will and self-conceit as to shew, by word and deed, that they are familiar with their own weakness and are on their guard against it ; that they are at least learning to think humbly of themselves, as they ought to think, and to "esteem others better than themselves." And when the Voice

comes to them, "Friend, go up higher, take a more honourable post, a more conspicuous seat, not that you may be better seen or receive praise from men, but that you may serve them better, on a larger scale or in a more public way," no one is more unaffectedly surprised than they are; none enter on their new work with more modesty, and therefore with a more humble dependence on Him without whom nothing is wise, nothing strong, nothing good. So far from craving and pushing for high places for which they are unfit, it is often hard to persuade them that they are fit for even the lowliest function, the simplest task. Yet these are precisely the men whom we all delight to honour and to see honoured, the men of whose spirit and usefulness we are most assured, and of whose capacity for any work they can be induced to take. We cheerfully give them the "worship" or "glory" they do not seek. Because they abase themselves, we rejoice in their exaltation.

Does, however, even this wholesome and pertinent lesson on humility exhaust the spiritual meaning which we are told this Parable must have? By no means, I think. We may read it in a sense in which even the unwelcome command, "Go down lower," may become welcome to us, and may really mean, "Come up higher."

How often does our Lord compare the kingdom of heaven, *i.e.*, the ideal Church, to a feast to which all are invited, and all may come, without money and without price, to eat of a meat that satisfies the soul, and to drink of a cup of which, if any man drink, he shall never thirst. And when we listen to the call, when we come

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into his kingdom and sit down at his table, how often does the first joy of our salvation fade and dwindle into disappointment and dismay as we perceive that his salvation is in large measure a salvation from ourselves, that his call is really a call to an arduous struggle with our vices, our faults, our tempers, our defects, a call to a constant and painful effort at self-culture and self-improvement, a call to a service of others which grows ever more laborious and more exacting ; in short, a call to share in his own self-sacrificing love, his unthanked toil, his indifference to all the lower aims of life that we may pursue its highest aims, or even to share his poverty, his shame, his affliction. When we first apprehend what his call really means, does it not seem to us as if it were a command to come down, not alone from all that we once took pleasure or pride in, from the worldly ambitions and aims which we had cherished, but also from the very honours and enjoyments which we had looked for in his kingdom and service ? Ask the man who has only provoked the hostility of the Church itself by his fidelity to truth and conscience. Ask the man who by his integrity, his refusal to submit to the customary chicaneries of the manufactory or the market has been plunged into the squalid shifts of penury, and has to struggle for his bread day by day, with no bright prospect to cheer him, uncheered even, because not understood, by the approval of those whom he loves best. Ask the woman who goes back from this House to take up a crushing burden of toil, to strive and labour for those who, instead of loving and thanking her, take all she does for them as

mere matter of course, who puts up with a thousand wrongs and slights rather than offend against the law of Christ, and often toils on unrewarded till health breaks down and her spirit faints within her.<sup>1</sup> Ask any man or woman who has a real burden, a real cross to bear, with no help to bear it except from Heaven, while Heaven itself rarely appears to interpose on their behalf.

Ah, my brethren, "there are tears in things" ; there are pressures, pains, secret cares and sorrows in human life, and in many of your lives, over which a man might well weep, were weeping of any avail. And when such griefs and adversities as these first came on you, did it not seem as though the Master Himself were saying to you, "Go down lower ; you are not worthy of the joy of those who sit nearest to Me, who always behold my face. Your place is in the lowest, not the highest room."

Alas, how we misread his love ! For what can any call to the cross be but a call to the throne ? What can any demand on patience, service, self-sacrifice be but an invitation to share his spirit and to carry on his work ? Did not *He* know poverty, and the sting of ingratitude, and the lack of sympathy, and the unrewarded toil which you have to endure ? Was not his integrity, his fidelity to truth and conscience, tried even as yours is being tried ? Did not *He* love men more the less *He* was loved by them ? and serve them the more the

<sup>1</sup> These were no pictures from fancy, but sketches from real life. I had the *models* before me as I spoke.

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less they valued his service? And did not He win honour, as well as learn obedience, by the things which He suffered? Was it not precisely because He humbled Himself that He was exalted, and given a name which is above every name?

Said I not truly, then, that in his kingdom "Go down lower" may mean "Come up higher"? Is He not asking you to a higher place and task every time He asks you to bear the cross He bore, and to fill up the remnant of his affliction? You have only to humble yourselves, to accept the low place of service and trial in which He once sat, in order to find that it is really the highest place in the universe, the one place in which all your sorrows will be transmuted into joy.

Our joy, James Hinton used to say, and it was one of his deepest sayings, depends for its quality and endurance on the toil and sorrow it has absorbed and turned to its own use: the more it has absorbed the higher and more lasting it will be. And how true that is you will see if you reflect *how* men reach the finest and most honourable kinds of joy. It is always by a long strain of effort, by their constancy in hours of trial and adversity, by a zeal for the welfare of their fellows which is not to be checked or diverted by the indifference, the ingratitude, or even the hostility of those whom they are seeking to benefit. And can we complain because it is the purest and noblest kind of joy, joy of the divinest and most enduring quality, that our Lord will confer on us; or because, in order to confer it on us, He calls us to the services, tribulations, sacrifices by which alone it

can be attained? We shall not complain, we shall rather rejoice, if at least we have any generosity of nature, any nobility of aim. So often as He says to us, as He said to the Twelve, "Ye shall be sorrowful," we shall wait patiently and hopefully for the words that follow, "But your sorrow shall be turned into joy." For if it be true, according to a fine saying current in the Apostolic Church, that to be "near Christ" is to be "near the fire," it is also true that to be *in* the fire is to be with Christ: and if we are in the furnace with the Son of Man, the fire will not harm, much less consume, us: it will but purge and refine us into his likeness, and make us more meet both for his service and for his joy.

## VIII.

### *THE NEW VERSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.*

#### I.—THE GENERAL FEATURES OF THE VERSION.

THE best reviews of the Revised Version which I have seen<sup>1</sup> pronounce it “a literary success but a critical failure.” And that verdict is, I am disposed to think, a very fair one, if only it be gravely qualified—as most rough general verdicts need to be—on both sides. Viewed simply as a faithful reproduction of the Hebrew Original, the new Version *is* a critical failure; for it leaves a thousand passages indefinite and obscure to the English reader which might have been made clear had not our Revisers feared to make too many alterations in words which have grown familiar, and yet sacred, to us by long use. But, on the other hand, it must be admitted that in a thousand other passages they have given us, for the first time, the true meaning of the Original,—making that which was obscure in the Authorized Version plain, and that which was crooked

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, in June, 1885, when these “lectures” were written and delivered, barely a month after the Version was published.

straight ; correcting blunders, supplying defects, and bringing light into darkness at the slightest possible cost of change. Viewed purely as a work of literary art, the new Translation *is* a success, if by a success we mean no more than that few unnecessary changes, and indeed comparatively few changes of any kind, have been made in the Version which has long taken rank as an English classic. But, on the other hand, if by a success we mean that the Hebrew original has been rendered into the best possible English, *i.e.*, such English as we should expect from a competent translator of any Classical masterpiece, it must be admitted that the success of the new Version is very far from complete.

On the whole I think it probable that the revised Version of the Old Testament will meet with a much more general welcome from the general public than the revised New Testament received, partly because its changes are fewer, and partly because some of its larger changes, changes of form mainly, are so obviously wise and helpful ; but that among scholars—Dean Burgon always excepted—the Revisers of the New Testament will be held to have done the critical part of their work more thoroughly, and to have brought their readers nearer both to the form and to the sense of the original text.

As you read your new Bibles, in short, I suspect you will find more of the old music and charm in the language of the Old Testament, with many aids—if not so many as might have been given you—to a truer understanding of its meaning ; while in the New Testament

you will find much less of the old charm and beauty of expression, but more to aid you in your endeavours to reach the mind of the inspiring Spirit.

And whatever this critic or that may say about it, whatever you may read in Newspapers or Magazines, you may, I think, be quite sure of this: that, for all the larger purposes of study and devotion, you have now a much better, a much more accurate and helpful, translation of the Bible in your hands than your fathers had; while yet you have theirs as well as your own, and may make use of both at your pleasure.

For myself, indeed, the great advantage which I anticipate from the New Version is that, at least for many years to come, all English-speaking races will use both the old and the new Versions; that they will read the Bible more frequently, continuously, and attentively than before, if only that they may compare the two and form some estimate of their respective merits: and that, seeing how the same great facts and truths may be expressed in different words, they may be weaned from their devotion to the mere letter of Scripture, and more deeply attached to its animating spirit. And no advantage could well be greater than this; for while the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life.

Here, then, we have a new version of the Old Testament just put into our hands. From thirty to forty of our most learned Hebraists have laboured at it for fifteen years, spending on their meetings more days than would make up two years, in addition to all the hours devoted to private preparatory study. We owe them a

great debt. And whatever we may think of the outcome of their toils, neither we nor our children are at all likely to receive another version on anything like the same authority. Surely, then, it will be our wisdom to learn, as quickly as we may, how to make the best use of the translation they have given us, how to get from it all the help we can.

And there is much to help us even in the mere form in which the New Version is printed.

1. By the simple device of arranging the text in paragraphs, *the extent of which is determined by the sense*, the old and often injudicious divisions into chapter and verse are put on one side with the best effect. In the Authorized Version a continuous passage is often broken into separate sentences by being split up into verses, or by the punctuation of the verses ; while at times one chapter ends and another begins in the middle of a story or an argument. All that has been changed ; and in the New Version whatever help can be given by a judicious arrangement and punctuation is as fully at your service as if you were reading a modern book or magazine. For convenience of reference, the chapter and verse numbers are still retained ; but the whole Book is now printed in paragraphs which are independent of chapter and verse. And you may take it as a good working rule, that if, instead of commencing a lesson, or a reading at the beginning of a chapter and closing it at the end, you read a paragraph through, or a group of paragraphs, you will secure a scripture which shall be complete in itself.

2. Another change in the mere form of the Book is still more helpful, so helpful that I cannot but wish that it had been carried much further than it has been. The poetical books and quotations are printed in the measured lines in which we print the work of our own poets, so marking the fact that it is poetry we are reading and not prose. In such scriptures as Job, the Psalter, Proverbs, Solomon's Song, this new arrangement of the lines is often very instructive and suggestive. While by printing in a poetic form the citations from ancient songs and ballads imbedded in the historical books, the Revisers have sometimes saved us from a serious blunder, and sometimes thrown a new light on a character or an event. Thus, for example, if in reading Joshua x. 12, 13, *they* had but seen, as we are now compelled to see, that Joshua's command to the sun to stand still on Gibeon and to the moon to hang poised over Ajalon, was a quotation from an old book of ballads, and not the work of some grave chronicler, certain sceptics might have been saved from sneering at a miracle which they held to be incredible, while many a sincere believer would have been spared the perplexity which that supposed miracle created in his mind. So, too, if, as we read Judges xiv. and xv., we find that humorous and sweet-blooded hero, Samson, breaking into verse on at least three separate occasions, we cannot but be charmed with the new aspect of his character, or temperament, thus suggested to us. If we are surprised—and bulk and brains do not always go together—we are pleasantly surprised to learn that this great hero, the Hercules of the Bible,

was also, in our vernacular phrase, “a bit of a poet,” and had a fine musical brain as well as brawny limbs and mighty thews.

My only regret is that this most helpful change of form has not been carried out more consistently and thoroughly. I know of no reason, or of no adequate reason, why, if the book of *Proverbs* is to be printed as poetry, the book *Ecclesiastes* should not be treated in the same way; and yet in our New Version the *Proverbs* are printed as poetry and *Ecclesiastes* as prose. But the great default of the New Version is that the prophetical books of the Old Testament, except in a very few “purely lyrical passages,” are branded as prose. For in denying the claim of the Prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, to be regarded as poets, our Revisers oppose themselves not only to the judgment of the greatest critics of all ages, but also to the popular verdict, to the common sense of generation after generation of mankind. Almost every reader and lover of the Bible would say, I think, that he finds its most sublime and magnificent poetry in these very books; that, in this respect, no book can compare with them unless it be *Job* or the *Psalter*. Isaiah not a poet! Habakkuk not a poet! Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zephaniah, not poets! We could not believe it were an angel out of heaven to affirm it, or even a committee of angels with an archangel in the chair. If the goodly fellowship of the prophets includes no poets, there have been no poets since the world began.

The Revisers say, indeed, that the writings of the

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prophets are “of the nature of impassioned prose” rather than poetry. They might as well tell us that Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* are “of the nature of impassioned prose,” because, “except in purely lyrical passages,” their verses have no rhymes. They are compelled to admit that the language of the prophetical books is “frequently marked by parallelism,” that well-known feature of Hebrew poetry. And, where *that* is wanting, there are still to be found those workings of high and strenuous imagination in the substance of the prophetical scriptures, and that distinction, pregnancy, and elevation of style, which are the surest marks of poetry in any tongue.

The “Prophets” make up more than a quarter of the whole bulk of the Old Testament. So that to print them as prose is to convey an utterly false impression of the extent to which poetry enters into its composition. Roughly computed, the real proportion amounts to three-sevenths poetry to four-sevenths prose,—a fact which carries with it some very notable inferences. Whereas, by excluding the Prophecies from the poetical books, the proportion is reduced to one-seventh of poetry and sixth-sevenths of prose.

Even in their handling of poetical citations, the Revisers have not been altogether consistent, though in this, we may assume, that their inconsistency has sprung from oversight rather than intention. Some at least of the little songs, or scraps of songs—brief as the robin’s strain, but quite as sweet and welcome—inserted in the historical books are *not* printed in the poetical form.

For example, Sarah's song over the birth of her boy (Genesis xxi. 6, 7) is not thus rendered. Were it printed as follows,

God hath made me to laugh,  
So that all who hear me will laugh with me.  
Who would have said to Abraham,  
Sarah gives baby the breast?  
Yet I have borne him a son in his old age,

we should have at once associated "the Princess" with Hannah and with the Virgin Mary, in whom, as in so many womanly hearts, maternal love rose into song.

Even more inexcusable is the omission in 1 Chronicles xii. 18, to recognize the little strophe of five lines with which Amasai saluted David :

Thine are we, David,  
And on thy side, thou son of Jesse !  
Peace, peace be unto thee,  
And peace unto thy helpers ;  
For thy God hath helped thee.

For here, not only do the diction and the parallelism demand the poetic form, as in the previous case : but the verse itself teaches us to expect an elevated and inspired utterance by its introductory words, "*Then the spirit came upon (or clothed) Amasai.*"

3. In the Margin of the New Version you will find many alternative readings to those given in the Text ; and, as a rule, though it is a rule with a good many exceptions, these marginal readings are better—more literal and more suggestive—than those of the text. It is reported, I know not how truly, that many of these

marginal readings *were* at first inserted in the text, but that our Revisers, alarmed by the outcry against the too numerous changes which their colleagues had made in the New Testament, transferred them to the margin at their final revision. However that may have been, these marginal readings will prove a great help to you in the study of the Sacred Writings; and you may take it for granted, I think, that, but for the public dislike of change, many of them would have been placed in the text instead of being relegated to the margin.

One of the ablest reviews I have read<sup>1</sup> gives an illustration of the value of these marginal readings which may be familiar to many of you. The writer says: "It is surprising to find the sentence in Job, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' changed to, 'Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him,' which is simply nonsense; while the generally sanctioned reading, 'He will slay me, I have no hope,' retreats as usual into the margin." And you may remember with what pain and regret *we* found ourselves compelled, when we studied Job together,<sup>2</sup> to give up the noble phrase of the Authorized Version, and to read the verse thus:

<sup>1</sup> *The Scotsman*, May 19, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> The allusion is, of course, to the series of expository lectures on *Job* which I delivered to my Bible Class in the winter of 1875, and which were afterward published in "A Commentary on the Book of Job" (1880). Each lecture was followed by a discussion. And I can still remember the tone of pain and remonstrance in which, on the occasion referred to, one of my hearers exclaimed, "I would rather have you alter almost any other verse in the Bible than that!" and the very general response which his exclamation evoked.

Lo, He may slay me ; I have ceased to hope :  
Still let me defend my ways to his face.

Yet if you look carefully at the marginal readings of Job xvii. 15 in the New Version, you will find ample authority for the rendering we adopted.

4. At the close of the new Old Testament some fourteen pages are devoted to alterations suggested by the American company of Revisers which our English scholars declined to adopt, though they thought them good enough to be worthy of a place in this Appendix. And, indeed, many of them are so good as to deserve a place in the Text itself. You will do well to consult them, and to attach considerable weight to them.

The *general* suggestions of the American company, which fill the first two pages of the Appendix, are in a special degree marked by good sense ; and when you have considered them, I suspect you will wish, with me, that most of them had been accepted : for, as a rule, they point to the substitution of modern for archaic spelling, of modern words for words which have fallen into disuse, and are therefore likely to be misunderstood or not understood at all. Everybody knows what an “adder” is ; few are sure what a “basilisk” may be. Everybody knows what is meant by the “capital” of a column ; few know that “chapiter” is but another form of the same word derived through the old French, and that both come from the Latin word, *caput*, for “head.” Many get no clear idea when they read of Jacob’s “straked” cattle, who know very well what “streaked” or “brindled” cattle are. And as of all books the Bible

should be written in "a language understood of the people," it surely would have been better, as the Americans suggested, to replace "straked" with "streaked," "chapiter" with "capital," and "basilisk" with "adder."

5. There are two other changes which the Revisers think of sufficient importance to demand special mention in their Preface—in one, if not both, of which *we* cannot but take a profound interest.

(a) The singular noun "people" is very frequently replaced by the plural "peoples," especially in the Psalms and the Prophets. There was grave need for the change. For when we read in the Psalms such words as these (Psalm lxvii.) : "Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee," or when one of the prophets affirms (Isaiah lv. 4) that the Son of David is "given for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people," we may naturally conclude that it is simply the people of Israel who are to receive a Ruler and a Redeemer, that it is only the elect people who are summoned to join in a song of praise and thanksgiving. But when we read, as in the New Version, "Let the *peoples* praise thee, O God, let *all the peoples* praise thee," or, "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the *peoples*, a leader and commander to the *peoples*," we see at once that the redeeming mercy of God is not confined to a single race, even though it be the elect race, but that *all nations* are called to share in his salvation, his service, his praise. Slight and simple as the alteration is therefore, it occurs so often and means so much as to greatly enlarge the scope of our thoughts. It gives a new and

nobler tone to many of the most familiar passages of Holy Writ. And, above all, it restores that note of universality to the Hebrew Scriptures which many of us had failed to find in them, and hardly expected to find. To some, I suspect, it will come with all the force of a new revelation that, even under the Old Dispensation, God really cared for all men, and taught the Hebrew preachers and singers to care for them too.

(β) The other change to which I referred is the virtual banishment of the word “hell”—which some years since was cast out of the New Testament—from the pages of the Old Testament, except in a few of the prophetical writings; while a pitiful little apology is made for its retention even there, accompanied by a careful explanation that, where it is still retained, the word is not to be taken in its customary and popular sense.

Here is what the Revisers have to say on this much mooted point. “The Hebrew *Sheôl*, which signifies the abode of departed spirits, and corresponds to the Greek *Hades*, or the under-world, is variously rendered in the Authorized Version by ‘grave,’ ‘pit,’ and ‘hell.’ Of these renderings ‘hell,’ if it could be taken in its original sense as used in the Creeds, would be a fairly adequate equivalent for the Hebrew word; but it is so commonly understood of the place of torment that to employ it frequently would lead to inevitable misunderstanding. The Revisers, therefore, in the historical narratives, have left the rendering ‘the grave’ or ‘the pit’ in the text, with a marginal note (Heb. *Sheol*) to indi-

cate that it does not signify 'the place of burial'; while in the poetical writings they have put most commonly *Sheol* in the text, and 'the grave' in the margin. In Isaiah xiv.,<sup>1</sup> however, where 'hell' is used in more of its original sense and is less liable to be misunderstood, and where any change in so familiar a passage, which was not distinctly an improvement, would be a decided loss, the Revisers have contented themselves with leaving 'hell' in the text, and have connected it with other passages by putting *Sheol* in the margin."

It does not seem to me, I confess, that on this point the Revisers have taken a wise course, or that they have much to say for it. To retain the words "grave" and "pit" in the historical narratives, although the word does not denote "the place of burial," while yet these words will infallibly suggest "the place of burial" to most readers of the Bible, is to mislead rather than to assist and instruct them. To keep the word "hell" in some of the prophetical writings, after banishing it from every other nook and corner of Scripture, is surely a wilful sin against the rule that, wherever possible, the same word in the Original is to be rendered by the same word

<sup>1</sup> It is curious that the Revisers should have constructed their sentence so awkwardly as to convey the impression—an impression not elsewhere qualified or corrected—that "hell" is only retained in one Chapter. In all, the word, so far as I can make out, is still used fifteen times. And as there is for the present no Concordance of the New Version to be consulted, it may save some of my readers trouble if I append a list of the references. The word *hell*, then, occurs in *Isaiah* v. 14; xiv. 9, 11, 15; xxviii. 15, 18; lvii. 9; *Ezekiel* xxxi. 15, 16, 17; xxxii. 21, 27; *Amos* ix. 2; *Jonah* ii. 2, and *Habakkuk* ii. 5.

in English. Nor do I see what harm would come even to the style of that noble and familiar passage in Isaiah xiv., to which they specially refer, were we to read, "Thou," or "Thy pomp shall be brought down to Hades," or "Hades is moved from beneath to meet thee," instead of preferring the misleading word "hell," which in the popular mind always suggests a place of torment instead of the abode of departed spirits.

Indeed, though there are some objections to it, I think the right, and therefore the wise, course would have been to use the word *Hades* throughout the Old Testament, if only to bring it into harmony with the Revised Version of the New Testament. To transfer the Hebrew word *Sheol* into an English translation is surely very unnecessary when the Greek *Hades* "which corresponds to it" is tolerably familiar to English ears. A known word is better than an unknown. And a word which really conveys the meaning of the Original is surely better than a word which must be laboriously explained before it carries any meaning at all. Hence I would have used *Hades* in the English wherever *Sheol* occurs in the Hebrew, even where it is now rendered by "grave" or "pit"; and so have avoided suggesting either "the place of burial" or "the place of torment" to the reader's mind. No doubt the introduction of this word would occasionally have marred the familiar rhythm and music of some well-known passage: as, *e.g.*, if, when Jacob is reproaching his sons, we were to make him say to them, "Ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to *Hades*," instead of, "Ye shall bring down my

gray hairs with sorrow *to the grave*." But when I remember how little even the rhythm need suffer, and how much more important it is that we should have the sense of Scripture than that we should be charmed with its music, I cannot but think it would have been well had the word *Hades* been used throughout, instead of our having, for one and the same Hebrew word, now *Sheol*, and now *grave*, and now *pit*. What the Hebrew always means is simply the under-world, "the abode of departed spirits"; and as we have no word of our own which carries that conception and no other, we are driven to select some foreign word, such as *Hades*, which is widely known among us. And having chosen, it would have been well, I think, to stand by it.

None the less, it is an immense advance, a great gain, that our Revisers, the picked scholars of all Churches, should publicly acknowledge that neither in the Old Testament nor the New is there a single word to denote that "place of endless torture" which but a few years since played so conspicuous a part in English theology that myriads of cultivated Englishmen might confess, with Mark Pattison—that in their early homes Religion was narrowed down to fear of hell and faith in the doctrine of the Atonement. Some of *you* must still remember how when I delivered the series of lectures afterward published in *Salvator Mundi*, and affirmed that the word "hell" ought to be cast out from our English Bible, because it had no place, because no word answering to it had any place, in the Original text;—some of you, I say, must still remember how incredible

that affirmation sounded to you, how anxious you were to find it true, while yet you feared it was too good to be true. *That* was less than ten years ago. And I little thought then that what I said ought to be done would be done so soon and by an authority so high. In the Old Version of the Bible the word occurred fifty-three times, and occasionally in passages of deep doctrinal import. In the New Version it occurs in only fifteen verses, none of which carry any dogmatic weight ; these fifteen are all in the poetical section of the Bible : and wherever it is still retained, the margin carefully reminds us that the word “hell” must *not* be taken to mean what everybody used to mean by it. It is a marvellous change ; and cannot fail to produce in time a profound effect on the popular conception of the character of God, and of his dealings with men both in this world and in that which is to come.

Not that there *is* no hell, because the word “hell” does not occur in Holy Writ. Some of us have been in hell, a deeper hell than Dante knew—the hell of being without God and without hope in the world ; the hell of being lost to truth, to purity, to goodness : and we know only too well what a “state of torment” it is. We know, too, that if we remain alienated and impenitent to the end, we shall carry our own hell with us into the world to come. But we know also that we need not remain in it, either here or there. We know that, in his love and in his pity, God is always seeking to redeem us from it, to draw us into the heaven of a righteousness and peace like his own. And we hope and believe that,

in the end, the love of God will prove to be stronger than the enmity of man, that the evil in us will be overcome by the good which is in Him.

The New Version does much to confirm that hope ; much to assure us that God always has cared, and always will care, for all men ; much, in many ways, to bring us nearer to his mind and will. And for these reasons we give it a hearty welcome, despite its faults and defects, and shall not fret ourselves overmuch even if we should find that it has lost some little of its ancient music and charm.

## IX.

### *THE NEW VERSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.*

#### II.—THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

IN speaking to you of the Revised Version of the Old Testament, I have already dwelt a little on its larger formal changes, and tried to shew you how to use it so as to get the largest possible help from it in your study of Holy Writ. And, now, if we are to take the trouble of forming a just and reasonable estimate of the value of a work which our Revisers have taken so much trouble to put into our hands, we must go carefully through at least one considerable and well-known passage, and both mark and appraise the alterations in it which they have made in the text or suggested in the margin.

I. Few passages are more familiar to us than the first document in the first book of Moses—a passage which extends from Genesis i. 1, to ii. 3. Let us take this scripture then, and note what our Revisers do with this ancient document which Moses copied into his book, modifying perhaps and commenting on it as he

went; a document in which some critics find a record of the creation of *pre-historic* man, the story of the origin of the Adamic race commencing, according to them, only with Verse 4 of Chapter ii.

Now if you compare the Authorized with the Revised Version of Genesis i., you will find the first alteration in the second Verse; where the elder Version reads, "And the earth was *without form* and void," while the new Version reads, "And the earth was *waste* and void." It is unfortunate that the very first change should be an unnecessary one. For the Hebrew phrase confessedly speaks of a time when the earth was a chaotic mass—shapeless, empty, confused, or, as Ovid has it (*Metam.* i. 6-9):

a rude and indigested mass,  
A lifeless lump, unfashioned and unframed.

And the Authorized Version conveys that idea quite as well as, if not better than, the Revised.

In this same Verse we have also an instance of the better reading being remanded to the Margin. In the text we still read, "And the Spirit of God *moved* upon the face of the waters"; but the margin bids us read, "And the Spirit of God *brooded* upon the face (*i.e.*, the surface) of the waters." As the figure of the Original implies that the Divine Spirit either *hovered* over the deep as a bird hovers over her young, or, more probably, *brooded* over it as a bird over her eggs, the marginal reading is to be preferred to that of the text. Milton has caught and reproduced this image in *Paradise Lost* (vii. 233-7):

Darkness profound  
Covered the abyss ; but on the watery calm  
His *brooding* wings the Spirit of God outspread ;  
And vital virtue infused, and vital warmth  
Throughout the fluid mass.

In Verse 6, however, the marginal suggestion must be taken simply as explanatory, not as a better reading. What the Verse describes is this:—Chaos, at first shrouded in darkness, had been surrounded by light; but it still formed an undivided mass, without shape or proportion. It was now, as the first step towards evolving a cosmos out of the chaos, to be divided into two parts, each of which might be in turn the basis and field of further creative activity. “God said, Let there be a firmament (*i.e.*, a firm and stedfast expanse) to divide the waters from the waters.” And the clear blue sky appeared, consisting of the condensed clouds, and assuming the semblance of a firm solid substance, with waters above and waters below. Heaven was divided from earth, and the clear solid expanse of sky marked, and maintains, the separation between the two.<sup>1</sup> The marginal word “expanse,” in short, helps to explain what is meant by “the firmament”; but no one surely would think of exchanging the one word for the other in the text. If the word “firmament” were no longer in the Bible, we should all feel as if we had lost an old friend.

In Verse 5, as, again, at Verses 8, 13, 19, 23, 31, we have a notable—and, as I think, admirable—alteration.

<sup>1</sup> Kalisch *in loco*.

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At the close of each of the great creative acts, or epochs, we are told in the Authorized Version, "And the evening and the morning were the first (or the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth) day." In the New Version the formula runs, "*And there was evening, and there was morning, one day*" (or a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth day). Now this new rendering, this alteration in the time-rubric of the Chapter, not only gives us a more exact translation of the Hebrew; it not only emphasizes the literary, as distinguished from the scientific, character of the record: it also, I think, throws an air of mystery and remoteness about the phrase which is very impressive. It *may* mean nothing more than an ordinary day; but it sounds as if it might mean much more,—whatever, in short, Science may determine it to mean. To my ear, at all events, this antique and mystic formula, repeated at regularly recurring intervals, sounds like the stroke of a greater horologe than that of the kitchen, or even of the belfry, clock, and is therefore very much in place in the ancient narrative in which we find it.

The New Version, moreover, is so printed, you will observe, as to divide the story of each of these days into separate paragraphs, instead of running them all into one, as the Authorized Version does, and so marks each of them as complete in itself.

In Verse 11 we have another vexatious, because unnecessary, alteration. The Old Version reads, "Let the earth *bring* forth grass"; and the New, "Let the earth *put* forth grass." But as the Hebrew simply

means, "Let the earth *yield* grass," the one translation is just as good as the other; and it is to be regretted that any change should have been made where none was required.<sup>1</sup>

But as the Verse goes on the Revisers make more than one good point. "And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed after *its* kind, and fruit-tree bearing fruit after *its* kind, *wherein is the seed thereof*." For, here, the omission of the definite article before "fruit-tree," and the substitution of the neuter for the masculine pronoun—"after *its* kind" for "after *his* kind"—are both good; and the improved phrase, "wherein is the seed thereof," renders it much more clear that the seed is to be in the fruit, and not in the tree.

The marginal readings to Verse 20 are, both of them, more literal and accurate than the renderings in the text; and perhaps the whole Verse ought to read, "Let the waters *swarm with swarms* of living creatures (Heb. "living *souls*"); and let birds fly above the earth *in the face* of the firmament." But, after all, the rendering of either the Authorized or the Revised Version conveys the real sense of the Verse; and where that is the case, the value of any alteration is very questionable.

But the substitution of "great *sea-monsters*" for "great *whales*," in Verse 21, is at once a necessary change and

<sup>1</sup> The only reason I can imagine for the change is that the Revisers wished to mark the difference between the two Hebrew verbs (*dasha* and *yatsa*) which the Original employs in Verses 11 and 12. But is the difference a vital one, or even important enough to demand emphasis in an English translation?

a marked improvement; since the Writer was much more probably thinking of alligators and crocodiles than of whales.

In Verse 30, where the text still reads, "everything that creepeth upon the earth wherein there is *life*," the margin rightly instructs us to read, "wherein there is *a living soul*." For, here, we have one of many passages in the Old Testament<sup>1</sup> which appear to hint that even what we call "the brute beasts" may have a principle of life in them resembling that which we find in ourselves, and may therefore rejoin us in "some equal sky." This hope, that even animals have a soul, and a soul which will survive the destruction of the body, has been very dear to some of the most cultivated and devout of men; and whether *we* cherish it or not, it ought not to be disguised from us that the Bible here attributes to every creature which moves or creeps across the face of the earth "a living soul," employing precisely the same phrase of *them* which we meet once more in Chapter ii. 7, where we read "And *man* became a living soul."

And, finally, in Chapter ii., Verse 1, the substitution of "and" for "thus" as the opening word of the Verse, indicates that we are about to enter, not on a summary

<sup>1</sup> More than one such passage occurs in this Document; for, in the Hebrew, Verse 20 reads, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of *living souls*;" Verse 21, "And God created . . . every *living soul*;" Verse 24, "And God said, Let the earth bring forth the *living soul* after its kind." Other instances will be found in Genesis ii. 7, 19; ix. 10, 12, 15, 16.

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of the six days' work, but on a description of the seventh day, which completes the creative week.<sup>1</sup>

We have now, I believe, gone over every alteration made or suggested in the first document inserted in the book of Genesis—with this result. Two of the changes made in the text seem to be quite unnecessary, neither adding to its accuracy nor its beauty; while eleven are more or less real improvements. Three of the renderings suggested in the margin are instructive and explanatory, but hardly worthy of a place in the text; while two are so good, so much better than the readings given in the text, that it is to be regretted they were not adopted. Or, in other words, the New Version either makes or suggests thirteen good changes, three which are very questionable, and two which are distinctly bad. And I suspect we may take the Revisers' treatment of this ancient document as a fair specimen of their whole work, and look to find in it at least two changes which will be generally approved, for every one that will be either suspected or condemned.

II. Some of you may have found this close and detailed examination of their work on a single Chapter somewhat tedious, though I have taken some pains to

<sup>1</sup> As the Revisers profess to put a broader space between the lines when the change of subject seems to "require a greater break" than can be "marked by the beginning of a new paragraph"; and as they do thus mark, *e.g.*, the division of certain Psalms into stanzas or strophes (see pp. 136, 137), it is to be regretted that they did not leave a wider space between Verses 3 and 4 of Chapter ii. to denote that the first document included in the book of Genesis came to an end with the former Verse, and that with the latter a second document is commenced.

make it as little tedious as I could. But we were bound, I think, to put the work on which they have expended years of toil to such a test as this, at least at one point. And now that we have applied the test to one scripture, we may lay it aside, and indulge ourselves by glancing only at passages of special interest.

1. In Chapter iii., then, and Verse 5, of this same book of Genesis a very bold and pregnant change is introduced into the text. The Old Version represents the Tempter as telling Eve that God had forbidden her and her husband to eat of the tree "whose fruit brought death into the world and all our woe," because He knew that in the day they ate thereof they would be as *gods*, "knowing good and evil." The New Version represents him, quite accurately, as saying, "God doth know that ye shall be as *God*, knowing good and evil." Nothing short of equality with God Himself was the lure which the Adversary dangled before the longing eyes of the mother of us all. And this great word "God" in Genesis has its echo in Psalm viii., which sets the creation of the universe, and of man, to the music of its song. Verse 5 of that Psalm should read, as I have often told you,<sup>1</sup> not, "Thou hast made him a little lower than *the angels*;" but, "Thou hast made him a little lower than *God*." It does so read in the Revised Version. And it is hardly possible to doubt that the Psalmist, whose thoughts were full of the story of the Creation as narrated in *Genesis*, took this bold word from that story. "Man," says David,

<sup>1</sup> *An Expositor's Notebook* (A.D. 1872). Art. "Little Children God's Stronghold for Troubled Men." Page 136.

as he walks on his palace roof by night and looks up into the bright Eastern sky—"Man may seem nothing, and less than nothing, when compared with the heavens, which are the work of thy fingers, O Lord, and the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained. And yet he is more and greater than them all. For Thou madest him but a little lower than Thyself, madest him to have dominion over all the work of thy hands." Tennyson has warned us of the power of "a lie which is half a truth." And the lie of the Tempter was of this potent kind. Man *was* made but a little lower than God, and made that he might become *as God*, a partaker of the Divine nature and holiness. That was all true enough. The lie lurked in the implication that to break, instead of to keep, God's commandment was the way in which God's purpose was to be achieved and man's true greatness secured.

Taken together, the two passages read us an impressive homily on the fact, that good ends are not to be gained by the use of evil means, nor great ends by the use of base and servile means. By listening to the cozening Voice of the Tempter our first parents did not hasten, they did but retard and postpone, the fulfilment of the Divine purpose ; they did not secure greatness, but fell from it and put it in jeopardy. And that will be the fate of all who stoop to sinister courses in order to secure high and noble ends. Good aims can only be reached in good ways.

2. In Chapter iv. we have two remarkable passages of which I gave you what I still hold to be the true

translation nearly twenty years ago.<sup>1</sup> Let us look at each of them deliberately. The first is contained in Verse 7. Cain and Abel have brought their respective offerings to the altar. Abel's is accepted, Cain's refused, because his deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Cain is very wroth, and under the pressure of his wrath his countenance falls. The Lord says to him, "Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen?" And then, according to the Authorized Version, He adds these sentences: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, Sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." In the first of these sentences the Revised Version makes no alteration. In the second it simply substitutes "Sin *coucheth*" for "Sin *lieth* at the door." In the last it makes no change, at least in the text. And yet this last sentence is one of the recognized and standing difficulties of Scripture. For many generations it was taken, in the teeth of all grammar and good sense, as affirming the right of primogeniture; divines and politicians used it to sanction the supremacy of the elder brother over the other children of the family. But ( $\alpha$ ) that right is a very questionable one, and has no ground that I can see in Nature or in reason. And ( $\beta$ ) it would be very curious if such a right were affirmed in the Hebrew Scriptures where, in almost every conspicuous instance, God Himself is depicted as violating it; as preferring Abel, and even Seth, before Cain, Isaac before

<sup>1</sup> In "The Croucher at the Door" and "The Song of the Sword," afterward printed in *An Expositor's Notebook*.

Ishmael, Jacob before Esau, Moses before Aaron, Abraham, Joseph, and David before their elder brethren. While (γ) were the right ever so reasonable and certain, the assertion of it would surely be out of place here, where God has just accepted the younger brother and rejected the elder. Is it likely, is it conceivable, that God should close, or should be represented as closing, a grave and sustained remonstrance against sin with an utterly irrelevant remark on the right of primogeniture?

If we are to bring sense, pertinence, harmony into the passage, we must so translate it as to suggest another interpretation of the final clause than this. Following in the steps of the greatest German scholars and critics (Gesenius, Ewald, Kalisch, and Delitzsch) I ventured to translate the Verse thus : “*If thou doest well, shall not it (thy fallen face, i.e.) be lifted up? And if thou doest not well, Sin is a croucher at the door. And his desire (i.e., the desire of the crouching Sin) is against thee, but thou shouldest rule over him.*” For thus we get a clear and congruous sense for the Verse. It is a Divine remonstrance against sin throughout, and the remonstrance rises to a true climax. Cain is warned that whilst he is nursing his wrath against Abel, Sin, like a beast of prey, as crafty as it is cruel, is crouching outside the door of his heart, only waiting for the door to be thrown open by any touch of passion, that he may spring in, and bite and rend and devour ; and he is admonished to guard the issues of his heart, *to keep the door shut*, lest the croucher should leap in, and he should be conquered

and destroyed by the evil lust over which he is bound to rule.<sup>1</sup>

That, I take it, is a very solemn and appropriate warning against the craft and cruelty of Sin, with its coat of velvet and claws of steel ; a warning which it will be well for us all to lay to heart ; for when *we* are cherishing evil thoughts and passions—not ruling them, but suffering them to rule us—the evil deed, which can never be undone, is not far off, and we are only too likely to fall a prey to our own lusts.

Now the translation which carries this warning with it, though unhappily it is not placed in the text of our New Version, is suggested by the marginal readings which, as I have said already, are often better than the readings in the text. If you take them discriminately out of the margin and piece them together, the whole Verse will read : “And the Lord said unto Cain, *If thou doest well, shall it not (i.e., shall not thy face) be lifted up? And if thou doest not well, Sin coucheth at the door. And unto (or, against) thee is its desire (the desire of the couching Sin), but thou shouldest rule over it.*” And that is about as near to my own translation as it well can be without using precisely the same words throughout.

<sup>1</sup> Since this lecture was delivered (June, 1885), I have been gratified by finding that that learned Hebraist, Professor Driver of Oxford, adopts the view of the Verse given above. “Sin is figured as a beast of prey, crouching at the door, and ready to spring upon the man who allows it an opportunity. . . . And (the Verse continues) the desire of Sin is directed towards thee ; but thy duty is . . . to overcome it.”

3. The other remarkable passage in this Chapter need not detain us quite so long. It is the tiny poem, the oldest probably in the world, recorded in Verses 23 and 24, and is, as you will see, marked out as poetry by the very form in which it is printed. In its wording it differs a little from the translation I published many years ago, but, except in one couplet, it yields substantially the same sense, and is, both in form and substance, a marked improvement on the rendering of the Authorized Version. It runs thus:—“And Lamech said unto his wives,

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice ;  
Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech :  
For I have slain a man for wounding me,  
    And a young man for bruising me.  
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,  
Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

The central couplet I preferred, and still prefer, to render,

I *will* slay men for smiting me,  
And for wounding me young men shall die ;

and even this rendering, which makes Lamech boast of what *he will do*, instead of telling us what he has done, is suggested in the margin of the New Version. I take this—the boast rather than the statement—to be the better rendering of the two simply because, with some of the best critics (*e.g.*, Ewald and Delitzsch), I believe that the song of Lamech celebrates the invention, or forging, of the sword.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, the old man was in

<sup>1</sup> This reading also is, substantially, adopted by Professor Driver. “Lamech, in a song of triumph, celebrates the invention (v. 22) of his son. Provided with weapons of brass and iron, he has slain the

a braggart mood. He struts before his wives, boasting that he is a more formidable, if not a braver and more resolute, man than his ancestor, more dangerous to offend, more bent on, more sure of, vengeance on his foes. And the most probable cause of his haughty vindictive mood is that his son, Tubal-cain, the great smith, who first of all men "forged every cutting instrument of bronze and iron," had just placed a sword, or some similar weapon of war, in his father's hand, and taught him its use. Lamech feels that his new weapon will so add to his strength and security as to make him safer than the mark of God made Cain. And, in the passionate exultation of the moment, he breaks into verse, chants the Song of the Sword, and vaunts the triumphs he foresees.

There are but two other, and those comparatively minor, points in this book of Genesis to which I can call your attention, though there are many more which would well repay attention. In Chapter xxxvii., Verse 3, we still read of Joseph's "coat of many colours" in the text, and could hardly expect, indeed, that the Revisers would have had the courage to rob us, and the future world of children, of that bright and familiar touch. But what the Hebrew means and says is that Jacob invested his darling son in the long robe with long sleeves which was then worn only by princes, priests, scribes—in short, by the leisured and cultured classes who were raised above

men who had assailed him : if Cain was to be avenged sevenfold, Lamech, armed as he is, may avenge himself seventy and sevenfold."

the necessity of daily toil.<sup>1</sup> Those who had to earn their bread by manual labour wore a short belted tunic with mere armholes, or curt sleeves. Such tunics were doubtless worn by Jacob's elder sons, who worked in the fields or tended sheep and cattle. And we can easily understand how their jealousy would be aroused when they saw Joseph invested in the long white robe which marked him out for exemption from any share in their toils, when they saw him treated as a being of a higher class, a finer clay. Grown men were not likely to be gravely affronted simply by seeing a pretty boy tricked out in a pretty coat ; but to see him lifted above themselves, indulged with special exemptions, marked out for special honour, might well move them to the anger and hatred which they cherished against him. The text of the New Version says nothing of this singular distinction. But, again, the margin comes to our help, and by informing us that "the coat of many colours" was really "*a long garment with sleeves*" puts us on the right track.

The other point to which I referred is this. Even from our Authorized Version we may gather that special trees were held in great honour by the ancients. Several references to notable trees are made in this book of Genesis. But the New Version doubles them, and so reminds us emphatically of the affection and respect they inspired. For, now, when we read of the "oaks" or "terebinth," instead of "the plains," of Mamre under which Abraham pitched his tent, built an altar (xiii. 18), and entertained angels unawares (xviii. 1), of

<sup>1</sup> See *An Expositor's Notebook*. Art. "Joseph's Coat."

“the tamarisk tree” which he planted in Beersheba, and under whose boughs he “called on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God” (xxi. 33), as well as of “the oak” at Moreh which was by Shechem (xii. 6) and “the oak below Bethel,” under which Jacob buried Rebekah’s nurse, and which was thenceforth called *Allon-bachuth*, or “the Oak of Weeping” (xxxv. 8), we get a deeper impression of the part which these noble and venerable trees played in the early history of mankind. Other references to celebrated trees of high antiquity will be found in Judges iv. 5 (“the palm-tree of Deborah”), vi. 11 (“the oak which was in Ophrah”), ix. 6, 37 (“the oak of the Sorcerers”), 1 Samuel x. 3 (“the oak of Tabor”), and xxxi. 13 (“the tamarisk tree in Jabesh”). And those of you who think, with me, that a large and finely-grown tree is the most beautiful, wonderful, and satisfying object in the natural world, a thing to love and reverence and delight in, will be glad to find such honour paid to trees in the earlier books of the Bible. For myself I am no more surprised to learn that in primitive times men worshipped trees than that they worshipped stars. And I have always felt it as a sign of grace in a man in whom I do not find much to admire that at least once, on his marches, Alexander the Great was so impressed by the stately and manifold beauty of a magnificent tree that, in his barbaric splendid way, he did homage to it by hanging round its branches massive bracelets of gold.<sup>1</sup> That would not make the tree more beautiful, indeed; but it does something to redeem the character of the man.

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus vii. 31.

Though I have detained you so long, I have been unable to take up a tithe of the points of interest suggested by the new rendering of the book of Genesis. Yet I cannot but hope that even this brief and inadequate examination of it will help you to see how much you may learn from the Revised Version, if only you patiently follow out the clues which it puts into our hands. If any man were foolish enough to expect a faultless translation, which he would read without much toil of thought, without a constant exercise of intelligence and discrimination, he, no doubt, will be disappointed with the work of our, or indeed of any, revisers. But if, as I trust, you are prepared to bring to it a studious and a prayerful mind, you will I am sure receive it very thankfully, and gain much from it which will prove most helpful and instructive; all the more instructive and helpful precisely because you cannot get the benefit of it without thought and endeavour.

X.

*THE NEW VERSION OF THE OLD  
TESTAMENT.*

III.—THE PSALTER.

IN my first lecture on the New Version of the Old Testament, I gave you a rough estimate of its value, and endeavoured to shew you how to use it so as to get from it the most and the best it has to give. In the second, I called your attention to every change made or suggested in the first document included in the book of Genesis, that you might, at least at one point, put the work to a fair and thorough test ; and when I had thus taxed your patience, we indulged ourselves by glancing at some of the more remarkable and instructive alterations in the rest of that book—in, for example, the Divine remonstrance with Cain, and the Song of the Sword, and the marginal reading for “the coat of many colours.” And now I have promised to say a few words to you on the Psalter, and the changes the Revisers have made in it,—a promise which I am tempted to regret, simply because even in a comparatively brief study of this Scripture I have collected materials for a long series of lectures,

rather than for a single discourse, and find it very hard to make a satisfactory selection. There is so much I should like to say, and yet foresee I shall be unable to say, that I am afraid I can only give you an utterly inadequate conception of the aids to be derived from the New Version of these sacred, but dear and familiar, Songs. On the whole I can do no better, I think, than (1) say a few words on some general and outstanding features of the New Psalter, which pervade its whole structure ; and then (2) ask your special attention to a few of the special changes which struck me most on my first perusal of it, and struck me mainly, I suppose, because there is hardly one of them to which I have not at some time called your attention.

I. The most obvious change is, of course, that the Psalms are printed—and the Psalms being poetry, are *rightly* printed—as poetry, and not as prose. Not that you will find any rhymes in them, any more than you will in our own blank verse, though that be the noblest and most difficult of all poetic forms. For ancient poetry knew nothing of rhymes. It was distinguished from prose by its accents and assonances, by its daintier—its more elevated and harmonious—diction ; and, above all, by being charged with a more vivid imagination, a more deep and intense emotion. The main external characteristic of Hebrew, as of much other Oriental, poetry, is its parallelism. And this parallelism is not easy to define ; for it takes many forms. Sometimes it is a mere repetition of the same thought in other words, as in the well-known Verse (Psalm xxvii. 1) :

The Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom shall I fear ?  
The Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall I be afraid ?

Sometimes, the same thought is expressed in heightened terms, as in that familiar Verse (Psalm i. 1) which speaks of the blessedness of the man

That walketh not in the counsel of the wicked,  
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,  
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful,

where verbs and nouns all grow more intense, more vividly descriptive of the habitual sinner and of his growing hardihood and degradation, from line to line. And, sometimes, the second line is simply in antithesis to the first, as in Psalm cxv, 16 :

The heavens are the heavens of the Lord,  
But the earth hath He given to the children of men.

Whatever the form the parallelism may assume, however, its force is more clearly seen now that the Psalms are printed in measured parallel lines, which enable, and almost compel, us to compare or contrast the one line with the other. Nor is it a slight help to the general reader to be reminded, every time he opens the Psalter, that it *is* poetry he is reading, and to be gently solicited to examine into its structure, and force, and beauty.

(2) But if, instead of opening it anywhere, you open the Psalter at the beginning, you will at once observe that its very title is not the same in the two Versions. In the Authorized Version it is called "The Book of Psalms" ; in the Revised Version it is called "The

“Psalms” simply ; but under this general title you find, in smaller type, “Book I.” If you turn over the pages till you reach Psalm xlii. you find at the top of it “Book II.,” the lxxiii. Psalm is headed “Book III.,” the xc. “Book IV.,” and the cvii. “Book V.” And thus you are reminded of the fact that the Jews used no less than five collections of Hymns in their domestic and public worship : the first compiled, probably, by Solomon, and consisting mainly of psalms composed by his father David ; the second and third compiled, in all probability, by “the men of Hezekiah,” and containing, in addition to a few of David’s psalms not included in the first book, one series by the sons of Korah and another series attributed to Asaph : while the fourth and fifth books were certainly not compiled until the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, and contain, for the most part, songs written during and after the Exile. Thus these collections, or books, are connected with the worship of the first Temple, with the great reformation of worship and manners in the reign of Hezekiah, and with the worship of the ransomed exiles in the new Sanctuary which they reared amid the ruins of Jerusalem. Now the date at which a psalm was written, or was adopted into public use, goes far to explain its meaning, to lend it new beauty and force. And the Revisers have done what they could to remind us of these dates by dividing the Psalter into five separate publications.

(3) Another formal but helpful change is one which you will have to search for with a careful eye. In a good many cases, at least, the division of a Psalm into

strophes is indicated by a slightly wider space being left between two lines (*e.g.*, Psalms xxiv., li., lxviii.). And in many of these cases, if you examine the structure of the psalm, you will have the pleasure of discovering that each of the strophes closes with a refrain or burden—a beautiful sentence which the whole psalm is designed to illustrate. Thus the refrain of Psalm xlii., twice repeated, is,

Hope thou in God ; for I shall yet praise Him  
Who is the health of my countenance and my God ;

that of Psalm xlvi., also twice repeated, is,

The Lord of hosts is with us,  
The God of Jacob is our refuge :

that of Psalm xlix., heightened in the second repetition, is,

Man that is in honour, and understandeth not,  
Is like the beasts that perish :

that of Psalm lvii. is,

Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens,  
And let thy glory be above all the earth :

that of Psalm lxxx., thrice repeated, is,

Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts ;  
Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved :

while that of Psalm cvii.,

O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness,  
And for his wonderful works to the children of men,

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is the most striking of all, being repeated no less than four times, and combined at each repetition with a fresh ascription of praise to God.

(4) Another change is, perhaps, the most pervading and the most instructive of all, though I cannot give you any illustrations of it, without unduly taxing your time and patience. It is hardly too much to say that the true force of the Hebrew tenses has only been discovered in our own day. And if you compare almost any page of the New Version with the corresponding page of the Old, you will see how this new knowledge has been employed : you will discover that where the one spoke of the past, the other often speaks of the present or the future ; and that where the one spoke of the future, the other often speaks of the past. No other alteration in the Psalter has done so much, I think, to bring out the true sense of the Original, or to aid us in ascertaining its true meaning. You will find it a very profitable exercise to look out some of these tense-changes for yourselves, and to consider what they imply.

(5) A minor alteration, and yet a very welcome one, consists in the uniform substitution of certain unobjectionable and simple helpful words for words which are either objectionable, or antiquated, or misleading. Every reader of any refinement will rejoice that for “*bloody*” we now invariably read “*bloodthirsty*” men. Many a reader, unversed in the bygone uses of English words, will find certain verses grow clearer by the substitution of “*lying*” for “*leaving*” ; and many more, by the substitution of “*pursue*” for “*persecute*,” since, though

“to persecute” did once mean nothing more than “to follow diligently,” it has now come to denote a pursuit with malice or intent to injure: while the substitution of “nations,” or “peoples,” for “people,” often throws a surprising breadth into the prayers and aspirations of the Psalmists, and shews us that they were invoking blessings, not on the elect “people” alone, but also on the great heathen races around them, in whom we have been too apt to think that God then took no interest. And, of course, any change which makes the Word of God more simple, more sweet, more catholic and charitable, than we have hitherto found it, is to be received with devout thanksgiving.

These are all the general alterations which I have noted in the New Psalter. Yet even these, when you add them together and consider what their cumulative force and value to all students of the Word will be, run up into a very considerable change, and will go far to make the Psalter a new, an easier, and a more suggestive book to those who are nurtured on the Revised Version and taught to handle it wisely.

II. But, of course, our final estimate of the worth of the New Version must mainly depend, here, as everywhere else, on the new translations inserted in the text or suggested in the margin. And of the most striking and important of these new renderings, I will now proceed to give you a sample, only begging you once more to bear in mind that it is quite impossible for me to give you more than a mere sample in the brief limits at my command.

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If, then, you turn to Psalm vii., Verse 11, in the Authorized Version, you will meet with an instance, and by no means a solitary one, of the way in which the Revisers of A.D. 1611 insinuated theological comment into their proper work of translation. The Verse reads, according to them, “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day.” The first clause is a pure blunder, and should be rendered, as in the New Version, not “God judgeth the righteous,” but “*God is a righteous judge*.” It is in the second clause that the theological bias peeps out. “God is angry every day,” said the Hebrew Psalmist. “Angry *with whom?*” asked our English translators. As *they* read the verse, their answer ought by all the rules of grammar to have been, “*With the righteous* whom He judges.” But that being an incredible thought to them, they leaped to the conclusion, “Why, with the wicked, to be sure ;” and inserted the words, “with the wicked,” in the text, although there is absolutely nothing corresponding to them in the Original. It would have been a shock to their theology to admit that God was daily angry with the elect ; though it ought not to have been a shock, and would not, had they borne in mind that there is no man so righteous that he sinneth not, or that the anger of our Lord never burned so hotly as against certain righteous persons who needed, or thought they needed, no repentance. All that David affirmed in the Verse, which they thus twisted out of its natural shape, was that, simply because the Judge of all the earth is a perfectly righteous judge, He must be angry every day

with a world in which even good men do so much that is wrong. And this thought is fairly expressed, expressed without theological bias, in the New Version,—

God is a righteous judge,  
Yea, a God that *hath indignation* every day ;

though I cannot but wish that they had kept the simpler form of the latter clause, and read the Verse,

God is a righteous judge,  
And a God *who is angry* every day :—

angry, my brethren, with you and me, as well as with publicans and sinners ; angry with all who wrong their own souls by breaking his holy law ; and angriest of all with those who sin against a long experience of his love and goodness.

In Psalm viii., Verse 5, we have one of the boldest changes in the whole Psalter. Where the Old Version reads, “Thou hast made man a little lower *than the angels*,” the New reads, “Thou hast made him but a little lower *than God*.” That this new reading is strictly accurate, and that it is merely an echo of words in the book of Genesis, I shewed you in my last lecture. And I need only add now that the change is so bold because it recognizes that there is a natural goodness in man—who is the son of God as well as the son of Adam—such as we may actually find even in the worst of our neighbours if we care to look for it, as well as a natural, or inherited, depravity : because it feeds the hope that those who were originally made in the image and after the simili-

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tude of God, may at last become *as God*, knowing good and evil, but hating evil and loving only that which is good. For it surely is not unreasonable to hope that the race to whom God gave dominion over all the works of his hands will at last find all things put under their feet—all things becoming theirs, because they are God's.

If you turn only to the next Psalm, you will find in Psalm ix., Verse 17, still further food for this hope; or, at lowest, a form of expression that does much to abate the horror and despair which have long darkened our outlook into the life to come. For when we read,

The wicked shall (*i.e.*, must) *return to Sheol*,  
*Even* all the nations that forget God,

instead of

The wicked shall be *turned into hell*,  
*And* all the nations that forget God,

the new reading starts a very different train of thought in our minds to the old. It recalls the original doom pronounced on sinful man (Gen. iii. 19), “Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou *return*,” and the echo of it in the Psalm attributed to Moses (xc. 3), “Thou turnest man to dust, and sayest, *Return*, ye children of men.” We are no longer compelled to conceive of wicked men and nations as doomed to an everlasting torment; we are simply taught that, as by the pressure of a Divine law or necessity, wicked nations, nations that forget God, must perish from the face of the earth; that the Divine Justice will be manifested in bringing them to a sudden

and premature end, and in redeeming those whom they have enslaved and oppressed out of their hands. And this is a thought "writ large" in the providence of God. The history of all great empires founded on force and cemented by fraud is a long and impressive commentary on it, from that of the vast tyrannies of Eastern antiquity down to that of the Napoleonic dynasty, destroyed only in our own day.

In Psalm x., Verse 4, we have a heightened and improved rendering of a difficult passage, though here even the New Version does not bring out the full sense of the Original, as indeed no mere translation can do. In the Authorized Version the Verse runs,

*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God;  
God is not in all his thoughts :*

in the Revised, it reads,

*The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, saith, He will not require it;  
All his thoughts are there is no God.*

And the new translation is every way better than the old. Instead of representing the haughty and obstinate sinner as refusing to inquire after God, to seek for Him if haply he may find Him, it represents him as practically denying God's rule, as flattering himself that, however cruel and insolent in wrong he may be, God will not require it at his hands, will not judge and punish him as he deserves. Instead of depicting him as not having God in *all*, or even in *any*, of his thoughts, it depicts him

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as maintaining in all his thoughts that there is no God to rule and judge.

The point at which even this excellent rendering fails is this : the word translated "thoughts" means specifically "devices, purposes, aims." It is a word of conduct, rather than of speculation. The man is not a professed atheist ; he is not one who has reasoned himself into the dreary conclusion that no God exists. Such men were very rare then, and even now they are more in noise than number. Probably David, in all his large experience of men, never encountered one of them. The man he was thinking of is a much commoner and baser creature. He is one who does not take the trouble to deny the existence of God. As an axiom of philosophy, or as an article in his creed, he will either admit, or even strongly affirm, that there is a God. It is in life and conduct that his practical atheism comes out. He pitches his aims as low, he is as selfish and greedy, as lustful and cruel, *as if* the universe had no Ruler, the earth no Judge, to call him to account and to reward him according to his deeds. He ignores, rather than denies, God. And that is a man whom we have all met, sometimes even in the Church itself ; nay, he is a man whom many of us have seen in the glass which reflected no image but our own, although the man we were may have long since ceased to be.

But I must not linger in this way over every psalm, though there is hardly one which might not profitably detain us. Pass over a few, and turn to Psalm xvi. I will not ask you to dwell on the substitution, in Verse

10, of “Thou wilt not leave my soul *to Sheol*,” for “Thou wilt not leave my soul *in hell*,” though it is of much value and suggests many thoughts. But look at Verses 2 and 3, and you will see how a very obscure passage has been informed with a clear and coherent meaning. The Verses used to read,

O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord ;  
*My goodness extendeth not to Thee,*  
But to the saints that are in the earth,  
And to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

They now read,

I have said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord ;  
*I have no good beyond Thee.*  
As for the saints that are in the earth,  
They are the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

I suppose it is hardly possible for any man whose spiritual instincts have been nourished on the Bible to peruse this new rendering without instantly concluding that it must be the true one. Not only does it bring a clear and satisfying sense into an obscure and perplexing passage, and a sense which is consistent with the main theme of the whole Psalm, that theme being that God is the strength, portion, and joy of all who put their trust in Him ; but it sums up this theme in one happy touch, “I have no good beyond Thee,” instead of puzzling us with the unintelligible assertion that our goodness, which is more and dearer to God than to any other being, does not extend to Him. That David should find his only and

dearest good in God, and that he should love all who found their chief good where he found his, is precisely such a thought as we might expect from him: and the sooner we too can honestly say to the Father and Lover of our souls, "We have no good beyond Thee," the happier and better we shall be.

A similar improvement, bringing new light into a familiar strain, has been wrought on Psalm xix., Verse 3. To say of the heavens and the firmament, of day and night, that they so declare the glory of God as that "there is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard" is no doubt to utter a fine and elevating thought. But it is not only an inaccurate, it is a poor and tame, rendering of the Hebrew as compared with that of our New Version; which makes the Psalmist affirm that, "*though they have no speech nor language, and their voice cannot be heard*," nevertheless "their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." For this noble personification of the Heavens and the Sky, and of Day and Night, is wonderfully enhanced in force and beauty by the paradox, and the mystery of the paradox, which attributes speech to things which have no speech, and a mighty witness and song to things which have neither language nor voice. Addison has caught the thought of the Psalmist, though the jingle of his metre is unworthy of the grandeur of the thought:

What though *in solemn silence* all  
Move round this dark terrestrial ball?  
In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
*And utter forth a glorious voice.*

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If you care for still another illustration, you have only to turn to Psalm lxxxiv., Verse 5, in order once more to find nonsense turned into sense. For what can one make of such a Verse as this?

Blessed is the man whose strength is *in Thee*,  
In whose heart are the ways *of them*.

*Whose* ways? we ask; *what* ways? and get no answer from text or context. But if the theme of the Psalm be in our minds when we read in the New Version,

Blessed is the man whose strength is in *Thee*,  
In whose heart are the *highways to Zion*,

we instantly catch the Psalmist's meaning. His theme is the pathetic charm of the Divine Sanctuary to worshippers who have long been denied the joy of public worship by stress of weather, by heavy storms or raging floods, or because an army lay encamped between the River and the City. How amiable, how lovely and attractive, are thy tabernacles, he cries to God,—not only to those who dwell near thy House, but also to those who can only visit it at the great national festivals, when the pilgrim caravans go up to Jerusalem. He envies the very birds who have built their nests in the altar. He counts that pilgrim happy to whom the Temple is so dear that his joy in visiting it turns even the most stony and barren waste into a valley musical with sweet living waters and gay with flowers; and who so fondly remembers every station and every step of the journey he can no longer take, that of him it may be said, "The highways to Zion are in his very heart."

The same thought finds another expression in Verse 10, though here our Revisers have put the better reading into the Margin. "I had rather be a door-keeper" should be "I had rather *stand*," or—better still, because more literally—"I had rather *lie*," a few nights "*on the threshold* of the house of the Lord than dwell," all my life, "in the tents of wickedness." For so we get at the sharp contrast in the Psalmist's mind, and learn that he, or his pilgrim, loves the house of God so well that he would rather spend the few brief nights of a festival on its mere threshold, than live all his days in the most sumptuous abodes of the unrighteous.

Finally, in one of the most perfect and joyful songs of the Psalter—Psalm c., Verse 3—we get a new beautiful phrase which renders it still more lovely and complete. If we read the second line of that Verse,

It is He (*i.e.*, God) that hath made us, *and not we ourselves*, we simply get the positive and negative aspects of the same thought. But if we read it, as in the New Version,

It is He that hath made us, *and we are his*,

we get two thoughts instead of one; and the latter is much the more tender and exquisite of the two. To know that God "made" us is one thing; it is another and a better thing to know that "we are his"—his peculiar treasure, his absolute possession; not his creatures simply, but his children, the objects of his protecting and redeeming love.

Here, then, I must close. I have not been able to use a tithe of the materials I had collected. I have had to pass by many changes as striking and suggestive as any of those on which I have touched. But I shall be content if, even by this cursory and inadequate examination of the New Psalter, I have shewn you how much instruction is to be derived from it, and set you on studying it for yourselves. It may, however, meet a question, an apprehension, in some of your minds if I add that, though these alterations must be new to many unlearned readers of the Bible, they are not new to any scholar who has given himself to the study of the Psalms. Every change to which I have referred in this lecture is to be found in every good commentary. And there is hardly one of them which I have not myself ventured to make again and again, when I have been speaking to you from the Psalms in which they occur, or even when I have selected these Psalms as lessons for the day and have read them with you as part of our public service.

## XI.

### *ON GAINING AND LOSING THE SOUL.*

“In your patience possess ye your souls.”—LUKE xxi. 19.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—MATTHEW xvi. 26.

BOTH these verses are differently rendered in the Revised Version. That reported by St. Matthew is rendered, “But what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his *life*?” While that reported by St. Luke is rendered, “In your patience *ye shall win* your souls.”

Of the two renderings of the Verse in Matthew’s Gospel, it will be enough for my present purpose to remark, that the word rendered “soul” in the Authorized Version, and “life” in the Revised Version, is *psyche* ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ), that it is commonly rendered “soul” in the New Testament, and that, in my judgment, there is no need to alter it here. Of the two translations of the Verse in Luke’s Gospel, it is only necessary to say that our Revisers had good authority for turning the command into a promise, and that the meaning of the Verse grows clearer if we translate it with them, “In (or by) your patience *ye shall win*”—*i.e.*, gain, or acquire—“your souls.”

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The only other critical remark with which I need trouble you is this: the word rendered "patience" in both our Versions covers a good deal more than we include under that term. It includes the two ideas of perseverance and of fidelity; and would be better translated by the word "endurance," best of all perhaps by the word "constancy."

Let us then take the saying reported by St. Matthew as it is given in our Authorized Version: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" while we read that reported by St. Luke: "By your *constancy* ye shall *gain* your souls;" for then our subject lies straight before us, and you will at once see that I am to speak to you on, How we may gain or lose, How we may acquire, and how we may forfeit, the soul.

Some of you may have heard a Roman Catholic speak of "*making* his soul," or say it was high time that one of his neighbours "*began to make* his soul." And, no doubt, when you first heard it, the phrase struck you as somewhat quaint and obscure. But you soon discovered what it meant—discovered that in the Roman Church a man "*makes his soul*" by retiring from the world, to devote himself to what are called "the duties of religion," such as meditation, penance, worship, confession, service, obedience. In like manner, when you first learn that our Lord enjoins men to win or acquire their souls, the phrase may strike you as equally singular and perplexing; and you may ask whether the soul is to be *gained* in the same way in which it is said to be *made*,

by withdrawing from the press of life and dedicating one's days to purely religious duties. And yet, *ought* the phrase to have a singular and perplexing sound for you? You have often heard and used its converse; you have often heard or spoken of men as *losing* their souls: why, then, should the thought of winning, gaining, acquiring a soul be strange to you?

I suppose it is because you have conceived of the soul as given by God, as complete in itself, therefore, though it may be developed by training and enriched by experience. But the body is also the gift of God; yet have you not both to make it, and to make it your own, by using it, by training it, by a wise and careful attention to the laws of health and the discipline of exercise; and, then, by mastering—by subduing, ruling, directing—its energies and appetites?

Or, to take a closer illustration, the mind, the intellectual faculty, is the gift of God; but, if you are to rise into the intellectual life, have you not to *make* your mind, to acquire it, to train its faculties, to develop its powers, to be faithful to its interests? There is a vast difference between mind and mind, much of which cannot be attributed to any inequality of original endowment. There are many kinds of difference between mind and mind—in refinement as well as in strength, in tone and aim as well as in energy, in acquired habit and learning as well as in natural capacity; and many of these differences are purely, or mainly, the result of what a man has done for himself, or has had done for him by others. A man is not a finished gentleman by nature, nor an erudite

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scholar, nor a learned and accomplished artist ; though there may be bents in his nature which predispose him to scholarship, or good manners, or artistic pursuits. He owes much to culture, to opportunity, to the prompting of circumstances, to the social atmosphere in which he has been bred, or to the influence upon him of stronger minds than his own with which he has been brought into contact.

There is a sense in which every man, and not simply the successful man of business who has raised himself from "chill penury" to opulence, is a *self-made* man. Some men are even consciously and deliberately self-made—architects of their own character even more truly than they are the architects of their own fortunes. They study themselves, ascertain what they can do, for what they are fit. They analyze the effects which certain kinds of knowledge, or emotion, or experience, produce upon them ; and they select and pursue what they think most likely to bring them into their best form, and make them what they most desire to be. Nor is it only great men who thus deliberately form themselves—such as that supreme German poet who is admitted to be the very type and apostle of self-culture. Much lesser men than he have early set a distinct ideal before them, and have worked up to it. Bayard Taylor, for example, the American traveller, lecturer, poet, when he was but three and twenty years of age, wrote these words : "I will become *the sculptor of my own mind's statue* ;" and you cannot read his biography—which is well worth reading mainly because it sets before us a man of no great mark

or unusual gifts who tried to make the best of himself—without seeing that the hammer and chisel were often in his hands ; and that he was trying to hew himself into shape, to frame himself into correspondence with his ideal.<sup>1</sup>

Now no man can thus educate, and elevate, himself save at a certain cost. Life is full of opportunities, full of solicitations, of many kinds ; and if you yield now to this, and now to that solicitation ; if you walk first in this path, and then in that, you will get—nowhere ; you will do nothing to purpose. You must have a clear aim before you ; you must be ardent, or, at lowest, persevering, in your pursuit of it, if you are to make and gain any character worth having. You must be faithful to your aim, your ideal, valuing it so highly that, to win it, you are content to put from you, to go without, much which is very pleasant and attractive in itself, because it would divert you from your leading aim, or hinder and delay your accomplishment of it.

So much as this we all know, we all admit to be true. We are perfectly familiar with the fact that it is men who place a single and worthy aim before them, and who pursue it with a single heart, who reach their aim,

<sup>1</sup> In his *Memoirs* Mark Pattison says of himself :—“ I have really no history but a mental history. . . . I have seen no one, known none of the celebrities of my own time intimately or at all, and have only an inaccurate memory for what I hear. *All my energy was directed upon one end—to improve myself, to form my own mind*, to sound things thoroughly, to free myself from the bondage of unreason and the traditional prejudices which, when I began first to think, constituted the whole of my intellectual fabric.”

become what they wish to be, get what they want to get; and thus distinguish themselves from the crowd, who have only a low and vulgar aim before them, or are led hither and thither by vagrant and fugitive desires.

But if we translate this familiar fact into the terms used by Christ ; if we say, “ By *constancy* ye shall win, or gain, yourselves,” we come so near his thought that it no longer presents any grave difficulty. For, as I have said, the word “ *constancy* ” includes both *perseverance* in pursuit of an aim, and *fidelity* to that aim at whatever cost or sacrifice. And, as we have just seen, it is precisely by such a persevering pursuit of a lofty and worthy ideal, and by such a fidelity to it as will daff aside all inducements to abandon it, however attractive they may be, that men become their own sculptors, hew out their own statue, approximate to the ideal they have set before them. In other words, it is quite true that by *constancy* we win, or make, our souls.

Nevertheless, there *is* a difference between “ *mind* ” and “ *soul* ” ; the two words have different meanings, and different connotations, for us. And hence this striking saying of our Lord’s will grow still more clear to us if we look at it from a higher and more spiritual point of view. It is not every man who can determine to be a poet or an artist, a sage or a scholar, even if he possess the natural gifts and bents which would fit him to become one. For every man is not at leisure to make experiments, to study himself until he knows for what he is best fitted, to follow the promptings of his heart, to watch the influences which different conditions and

pursuits produce upon him, the responses they awake within him, and then to select that or those which he deems most favourable to an orderly and happy development of his character and powers. It is quite true that man does not live by bread alone ; but it is also quite true that, without bread, it is impossible to live at all : and to earn our daily bread is not always consistent with the pursuit of the loftiest intellectual ideals.

All the more, then, let us bless God that it *is* consistent with a still loftier ideal. A man may aspire to be wise, even though he cannot hope to be learned ; and to be wise is better than to be learned. A man may aspire to be good, even though he cannot hope to be very wise ; and to be good is infinitely better than to be wise with any wisdom which does not make us good. There is no higher ideal than *this* ; none *so* high. And this is an ambition which any man may, which every man should, cherish before all others ; for it is an ambition which may be pursued under all conditions ; and which, if only we are constant to it, may be *most* quickly and surely gained when our conditions are most threatening and severe.

To be good, nay, to pursue goodness as our ruling aim, is to make, or gain, our souls. To be bad, or not to follow after that which is good, is to unmake or lose the soul. And hence, whatever other aims we may lawfully, or even laudably, place before us, *this* should stand first with us all. For what are we profited if we should achieve the highest distinction—what are we

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profited should we become great poets or artists, great scholars or statesmen, if we did not use our powers for good ends? Or, to use the sacred familiar words, "What is any man profited if he should gain the whole world only by the loss of his own soul?" Nay, more; what is *the world* profited if he should lose *that*? I often think, and more than once have tried to make you think, of Sir Walter Scott kissing Lockhart, that bitter man of the world, and saying to him with his dying breath, "Be *good*, my dear, be *good*." For Scott had gone far both to gain the world, and to lose it; only to discover at last—as sooner or later *you* will discover—that nothing but goodness is of any real worth. To be good, to do our duty in a dutiful and loving spirit, is the crown and top of all performance. And nothing short of this, nothing apart from this, will be of much comfort to us through life or in death. For, whatever England may do, it is very certain that *God* "expects every man to do his duty"—his duty to himself, to God, and to his neighbour—not only on this exceptional day or that, but every day.

Let me suppose, then, that, whatever other and subordinate aims you have set before you, you cherish *this* as your chief aim—to be good, to do your duty in the largest and highest sense. As Christian men you find your standard of duty, your ideal of goodness, in the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your great ambition is to be like Him, to be good after the pattern of his perfect goodness, to hew your statue after his image, into his likeness. Whatever your daily vocation

may be, you seek to follow it in his spirit. And, hence, you are not content with any gain, or any distinction, it may bring you, unless you can so discharge its duties as to be the better for them, the more like Him ; unless you can use its gains and distinctions in a way that will promote your own welfare and that of your fellows, and thus in all you do be making, or gaining, or getting possession of, your own souls.

If that be your ruling aim—and no Christian ought to be content with less than this—will you not need “constancy” for the pursuit and acquisition of it, and that in both senses of the word ? Can you hope to gain it without perseverance, without endurance ? Can you hope to gain it without fidelity, without being true to it at some risk, at some cost ? It is not likely ; it is not possible : for no lofty aim was ever yet achieved save by stedfast labour and a fidelity which withstood many a strain. But yours is the loftiest of all aims. How, then, should you attain it except by the stedfast fidelity which can endure the strain of toil and sacrifice ?

The tree  
Sucks kindlier nurture from a soil enriched  
By its own fallen leaves ; and man is *made*  
In heart and spirit from deciduous hopes  
And things that seem to perish.<sup>1</sup>

It was while He was dwelling on the toils and sacrifices by which the kingdom of heaven was to be established on the earth, while He was warning his disciples of the hatred they would provoke by their

<sup>1</sup> Henry Taylor.

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loyalty to Him, of the strifes and persecutions they would have to endure, of the "terrors" which would usher in his accession to the throne of the world, that Jesus promised them, "By your constancy ye shall acquire your souls." And though *we* may not be called to face such terrors and persecutions as theirs, who does not know that, if we would be true to Him, we must endure much and resign much? If *you* would be true to Him in your daily life and work, must you not turn away from many gratifications dear to the flesh and to the fleshly mind? Must you not, again and again, refuse to conform to the world and the world's law? Must you not decline, at some risk and loss, to take many of the ways by which others grow rich or push themselves into place and authority? Must you not renounce the vulgar aims which many pursue, and even rebuke, if only by your example, the vices, dishonesties, insincerities in which they allow themselves?

Most of you, I trust, have tried this great experiment, and are still trying it. Tell me, then, have you not found that it calls for a patient endurance and a steadfast fidelity which it is hard for you to render? Do you not daily encounter temptations from within, as well as from without, to which you are disposed to yield—temptations to indulge cravings, tempers, passions, which are inconsistent with your ruling aim? Are there not times even when, despite all that reason, conscience, and religion can do for you, you do yield to these temptations, and have to recover yourselves from them with effort, and toil, and prayer? Does not the issue of this

inward strife between good and evil still look a little dubious even to the best of you? Does not the work of grace proceed so slowly within you, so fitfully, so imperceptibly, that you sometimes doubt whether it makes any advance, whether it has been so much as begun, whether you shall not be compelled to throw it up in despair? And yet, do you not know and feel that if in these critical moments, under these heavy pressures of a toil which looks well-nigh fruitless, of a conflict which seems almost as far as ever from victory, you stand fast in the Lord, maintain your fidelity to Him, and resolutely strive on after the aim you have set before you, then these hard times will prove to be the growing times of the soul, and your very trials will bring you nearer to your end?

If so, your experience at once illustrates and confirms the promise of Christ. For your great encouragement to endurance and fidelity is that, by these, you are making, or gaining, your souls; that it is by such things as these "men live," and that "in all these there is life for the spirit." And, on the other hand, your great warning is, that if you yield to temptation and fail in the hour of trial, if you cease from the work and retire from the strife, whatever else you may gain, you will be losing your souls—losing possession of them, losing command of them, losing hope for them. You will be adjudging yourselves unworthy of the life eternal, condemning yourselves to live in the flesh and walk after the flesh, instead of living and walking in the spirit. All that is noblest, purest, best in you will die for want of

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sustenance or want of exercise. All that is loftiest and noblest in thought, in morality, in religion, in life, will lose its power over you, its charm for you, and will fail any longer to quicken responses of love and desire within you.

If you would know to what depths you may sink should you relinquish your aim, you have only to recall an experience which can hardly be strange to any man of mature years who has kept his soul alive. For who has not met an early friend, after long years of separation, only to find that by addicting himself to sensuous or selfish aims, by cherishing a vulgar and worldly spirit—or, in a word, by walking after the flesh—he has belied all the fair promise of his youth, and grown insensible to the charm and power of all that you still hold to be fairest, noblest, best? Speak to him of the open secrets of beauty, of purity, of truth, of love, and he stares at you as one who listens to a forgotten dream; or, perhaps—as I once saw a poor fellow do—bursts into tears, and exclaims, “No one has spoken to me like that for an age!” If you would waken any real interest in him, elicit any frank response, your whole talk must take a lower range; you must come down to the level on which he now lives and moves. What has the man been doing with himself all these years? He has been *losing his soul*, suffering it to “fust in him unused.” He has exchanged his “immortal jewel,” not for the whole world—though even that were a losing bargain—but for a little of that which even the world confesses to be vile and sordid and base.

To that base level even *you* may sink, my brethren, if, amid all trials and temptations and defeats, you do not stedfastly pursue the high spiritual aim which Christ invites and commands you to cherish ; if you do not seek above all else to be good, and do not therefore follow after whatsoever things are just, true, pure, fair. Hold fast to that aim, then ; that by your constancy you may gain and possess your souls.

## XII.

### *PRESENT-DAY SCRIPTURES.*

“Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, manifestly declared to be an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not on tables of stone, but on tables that are hearts of flesh.”—*2 CORINTHIANS* iii. 2, 3.

AMONG other charges alleged against St. Paul by the Hebraists who followed him to Corinth was this,—that while *they* brought letters of commendation from the Apostles at Jerusalem, *he* had no such letters to produce ; that he was, therefore, an unauthorized intruder, thrusting himself from sinister motives, for selfish personal ends, into a ministry to which he was not called. To this charge St. Paul virtually replies, that the Lord of the Church was not dead, but alive again ; that He still called men into the service and apostleship of the truth ; and that as he himself had been called to the ministry of the Word by the living Lord of the Church, as he had neither received his Gospel from men nor been instructed in it by men, but had received it directly from Christ, he did not need letters of commendation from the other Apostles. He was an apostle himself,

with a commission direct from Heaven. And the proof was that he himself had power to write epistles, or, rather, that the living Christ wrote living epistles by his hand. What need had *he* of call or commendation from men in whom Christ still manifested Himself as the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation? Above all, what need had he of commendation *to the Corinthians* who had recognized the wisdom and felt the power with which he had been charged by Christ, and had been raised by Him into a new and divine life?

This was St. Paul's leading thought; but his heart is very full, his thought takes many forms; and, as we can hardly fail to remark, his speech and figures of speech are broken and confused. His words throb with emotion; his metaphors break down under their weight of thought and passion. First, the Corinthians are an epistle written *on his heart*, so dear are they to him, so much in his mind. Then, they are an epistle *to the world*, written and sent forth by him, as the minister of Christ. Then, the epistle is written *on their hearts* instead of his, by the finger or Spirit of God rather than by him. Nay, the very figure of an epistle, turn it how he will, proves insufficient to express his meaning, and he runs it into another. The letter, written, with ink, on parchment, changes into a law graven not on slabs of stone, but on the warm and vital substance of the human heart. Obviously, the Apostle is carried away by the tumult of his emotions, and crowds into words a burden of meaning they will hardly bear.

Even to us, however, this broken and imperfect utter-

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ance is the more impressive for its very imperfections, since through these we catch glimpses of St. Paul's heart, and learn what he felt as well as what he thought. And, to the Corinthians, the very sentence which to us seems defective by its broken metaphors and crowding thoughts, must have seemed one of those rare and felicitous turns of expression of which only the great masters of language are capable. While it was the most graceful of compliments to them, it was also one of those swift controversial movements, turning the whole force of an adversary's argument against himself, which are peculiar to men of genius. "You, Paul, have no credentials, no letters of commendation," said his opponents and detractors. "Have I not?" replied the Apostle. "I have the best in the world. These men of Corinth, quickened into a divine life, *they* are my letter of commendation. And who could have a better letter, or more convincing credentials, than these?" It was a splendid stroke of oratory, of logic on fire with emotion: for what physician can produce a more cogent and persuasive testimonial than patients healed of many fatal diseases? or how can a teacher more convincingly demonstrate his fitness, his capacity, for his vocation, than in pupils proficient in the art, or science, he has taught them? or what *can* prove a man a true minister of Christ, if not a whole community drawn into the faith and obedience of Christ by his toils?

Every man, then, may be, every church should be, a living epistle of Christ, read and known of men. This is the ruling thought, this the ruling figure, of the pas-

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sage before us. Let us briefly inquire what it contains or implies.

1. The first characteristic of a letter is, that *it contains and expresses the mind of the writer*. An upright man uses words to convey his thoughts, not to conceal them. His letters express himself—his true plans and purposes and wishes. Can men, can churches, convey the mind of Christ as a letter conveys the mind of a friend? We might well doubt it, so imperfect are men, so imperfect are churches, while the mind of Christ is perfect and divine. We need to remember, therefore, both that language itself, even at its best, is but an imperfect expression of human thought; and that, in writing a letter, we do not carefully cull and select choice phrases, but let our words run pretty much as they come. We need to remember that a man, bent on communicating his thoughts and wishes to a friend, can write, if need be, on the most unpromising material—with a bad pen, and muddy ink, on any scraps of waste paper on which he can lay his hand. Nay, we have all heard of men—prisoners, for example—who have contrived to dispense with ink and paper and pen; who have scraped a little soot from the chimney to mix with water, or have drawn a little blood from an opened vein; and with these poor substitutes for ink have written on a shred of linen, or a chip of wood, with a splinter, a pin, a toothpick, and have thus maintained a secret correspondence with trusted friends or kept a record of their hopes and fears.

The very image of my text, therefore, suggests that,

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while the best materials will conduce to secure the most intelligible and perfect expression of the mind of Christ, He may disclose his thoughts through men and churches by no means perfect. And the suggestion is confirmed, placed beyond all doubt indeed, by the moral and spiritual state of the Corinthian Church. *They* were “a living epistle of Christ:” but how far were they from Christian perfection! They came behind no church in gifts; they were enriched with all utterance and all knowledge; but in moral power and elevation, in the graces of the Spirit as distinguished from his gifts, none was more deficient. A community so restless, changeful, and unruly, so divided, so puffed up, so wanton and impure, is not to be found in the pages of the New Testament. And yet, even on this vile paper, Christ wrote an epistle which shewed his pure mind to their heathen neighbours; an epistle sorely blotted and defaced indeed, but still a genuine epistle of Christ; an epistle which, despite all its defects, taught men the secret of a higher, a more generous, and even a purer life than they had ever seen before.

It is not, therefore, our conscious infirmities and sins, it is not the defects which we mourn and against which we strive, that will disqualify us for the use and service of Christ. What men value in a letter is not the kind of paper on which it is written, but the mind of the Writer: and even through us, sinful and defective as we may be, Christ can shew our neighbours what his mind is. All He requires of us is a willing heart, a desire to be conformed to his image, a sincere ambition to be useful

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in his service. Let Him but find this in us, and He can at least *begin* to write:—To write, for example, that it is his will that men should strive against the evil that is in them and their alienation from Him ; that they should be reconciled to God and to each other ; that they should value the most precious and love the best things most ; that they should live as heirs and fellow-heirs of immortality ; that they should love and serve their neighbours. *This* is the mind, though not the whole mind, of Christ. And He would have us convey and express it. He wants men to know that God loves them, and will both forgive and take away their sins. He wants them to know that his life—the life of purity, righteousness, charity—is the true life of man. He wants them to know that this life is in Him, and in Him that He may give it to them ; that, by giving it to them, He can reconcile and restore them to God, and constrain them to love and serve their neighbours. Nay, He wants to convey these sacred and quickening facts and truths to the world *through us*,—through our penitence for sin, our aversion from evil, through our amended lives, our trust in God, our love for our fellows. And if, despite our manifold faults and sins, we live, on the whole, in a vital faith in these great spiritual facts and truths, we *do* carry his message to the world around us ; we *are* epistles, written by Christ, read and known of men.

2. Let us see to it, however, that, like St. Paul, we are *the living epistles of a living Writer*. Paul would not admit for a moment that Christ was dead, or that He

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was no longer active or vocal in his Church. "He has called *me* to the apostleship," he argued, "although I never saw his face in the flesh. He gives me the words I speak, although I never heard his voice." And it was this intense faith in a Lord who was present with him, who still lived and ruled both in the church and the world, that made St. Paul, not an epistle only, but a secretary, an amanuensis, of Christ; capable of *writing* letters for the Lord, as well as of being a letter from the Lord.

So, too, with the Corinthians. Faulty and defective as they were, they were sure that Christ was a *living* Saviour and Ruler; that it was no mere story of what He had been, but also a declaration of what He was, that Paul brought them. These strange gifts of theirs—gifts of tongues, of healing, of prophesying, of ruling—were they not *his* gifts? Were they not gifts of life, gifts therefore of One who was Himself alive? of One who was the very Source and Fountain of life?

And we need this conviction no less than they. The very form in which the Christian Faith comes to us—in a book, in a history of what took place, and in letters which were written, centuries ago—tempts us to think of Christ as belonging to the past rather than to the present; tempts us to think of Him as not being with us now in the real and vital sense in which He dwelt among men at the beginning, instead of as being more really and vitally, because more inwardly and spiritually, present with us. In so far as we yield to the temptation, and conceive of Him as belonging to the past, our life

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loses its vigour, our spirits their force ; we do not act and tell on the world around us as we should. Letters written by dead men may be very curious, very valuable even ; but we put them away in our cabinets. We do not read them with the keen vivid interest with which we read the letters the postman brought this morning. They will tell us nothing we did not know. They are not concerned with our present interests. They do not stir and rouse our hearts. They do not call for reply, or rouse us to immediate action. And if we are to be living epistles, present-day scriptures, we must convey, and know that we convey, the mind of a living Christ. We must know that we are not doing homage to One who *was* a power in the world once, but are declaring the will of One who is now in the world, and who has all power in heaven and on earth. We must know and feel that we are not serving One who once lived the noblest life possible to man, and made the greatest of all sacrifices, dying that He might both reveal the true life of humanity and give it its true life, but One who is still the pattern of all excellence, who at this very time thinks of us and cares for us, suffers in our afflictions, and gladdens in our joys.

Besides the letters inspired by Christ centuries ago, we want the letters which He writes to-day—the living epistles contained in the lives of neighbours whom He has just redeemed, and purified, and sent out to speak for Him. And if we are to teach and help the world, we ourselves must become living epistles, manifestly declaring a Christ who still lives and saves. When men

“receive” us, *i.e.*, when they come to know us as we really are, they must receive Christ ; *i.e.*, they must no more doubt He is alive and operative in our hearts than they doubt a friend to be alive whose letter they have just read. It was thus that Christ drew the world to Himself at the beginning. “To sceptical Greeks and Romans Christianity appealed, not in manuscripts eighteen hundred years old,” nor even in manuscripts just written: but in living epistles, “in the ardent faith and earnest life” of those who believed on Him, and were willing even to die for Him. “It is, indeed, by the spirit and life of its confessors, more than by the eloquence or logic of its preachers (or even the inspiration of its scriptures), whether in the first century or the nineteenth, whether in nominal Christendom or in actual Heathendom, that Christianity gradually gains the verdict, and pronounces condemnation on its rivals and opposers.”<sup>1</sup> Happily for you and me, therefore, it is still true that—

Our dear Lord’s best interpreters  
Are faithful human souls ;  
The gospel of a life like theirs  
Is more than creeds or scrolls.

Only by a life which reflects the life of Christ can we hope to bring men to Him, to convey to them the conviction that He is alive, active, and ever seeking to win them to Himself.

We all know some men who do convey this conviction to their neighbours ; men whom we cannot meet without

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Whiton, *Beyond the Shadow*, p. 128.

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feeling that we are the better for it, the nearer to God and to all good things : men who do not care for gain or success as we care for it, nor for self-indulgence, who do not give way to fretful or passionate tempers ; men who seem to live above the world, to breathe a purer atmosphere ; to whom Christ is more real than the neighbours with whom they sit and talk, and the truths He taught more dear and engrossing than all else that history records or books contain, more dear and engrossing than even the most pressing and momentous interests of the passing day. And nothing persuades us of the reality and worth of religion like contact with such men as these. They come to us as from heaven, breathing its very spirit. They are like letters which Christ wrote but the other day, and which He lets us read that we may be reminded of Him and of his claim on us ; that we may see how pure, how kind, how gracious He is, and remember that we only reach our true life as we live in and by Him. Although their very presence be a rebuke to our worldliness or our selfishness, we never love religion so well as when we see it incarnated in them. Are not *they* in very deed the living epistles of the living Christ ? Do they not reflect his mind to us and convey his will ?

If you would resemble them, you must not be content with any profession of faith in Him, with holding a creed, with observing sacraments, with enjoying the teaching and worship of his House, nor even with being much occupied with the affairs of his Church. You must so believe in Him as that He shall be formed in you, as that his mind shall dwell in you and become your mind :

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for with his mind in you, you cannot fail to reveal his mind to your neighbours.

What, then, *is* Christ to you in your daily life? Do you take pains to frame as complete an image, as true and perfect a conception, of Him as you can? Do you carry that conception about with you wherever you go, and live by it in whatever you engage? Do you believe that his life, the eternal life which was manifested in Him, is at once the very life of God, and the true life of man, God's child? Do you instinctively and habitually measure yourself—your thoughts, motives, aims, actions, words—by the standard of that pure life; bringing your impurity into the light of his purity that it may be rebuked: contrasting your unrighteousness with his spotless righteousness, your selfishness and worldliness with his unworldliness and self-sacrifice, in order that the evil which is in you may be rebuked and overcome by the good which is in Him? Only by this constant and instinctive reference to Him amid the engagements of your common life, only by thus judging and renouncing whatever in you is unlike what you see to be in Him, can you become of one mind and heart and will with Him; only thus can you become a living scripture of his love and goodness which all men may recognize and read.

3. Finally: if a man may be, much more may *a church* be, a living epistle of Christ, a genuine present-day scripture, manifestly declaring his mind and will. "Ye are our epistle, our letter of commendation," said the Apostle, who wrote so many epistles, to the members of the Corinthian Church. "Your life and conduct commend

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me to the confidence of other churches, and other men, more than any Apostolic brief or letter." And, indeed, we can all see for ourselves that to have ransomed so many pagans in that wicked city from the bondage of evil into the service and liberty of Christ was the very best letter of commendation St. Paul could receive, that it was a deed speaking louder than any words, and saying : "We believe and are sure that this man was called and sent by Christ ; for Christ came to us through Him. Receive him, that ye also may receive Christ."

And every church is, or should be, an epistle, commanding, not its minister or apostle mainly, but the living Lord who speaks by him. When he appeals to the sinful, the indifferent, the thoughtless, and exhorts them to accept the salvation of God, that it may be well with them both in this life and in that which is to come ; does it lend no weight to a minister's words if he is pastor of a church whose members are conspicuous for their zeal in teaching the ignorant, succouring the distressed, and seeking to save the lost ? Is there, can there be, any letter which so forcibly commends the words which Christ has given him to speak, which makes them so influential and impressive ? Though you are for the most part dumb in the house of God, you nevertheless speak ; though you sit mute, you nevertheless add your gloss or comment on every word uttered from the pulpit. Your lives say, "That is true, that is of the last importance ; O listen to it !" or they say, "It may be true, but it is of no great moment : I don't much attend to it; why should you ?"

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If the speaker can confidently appeal to you as an epistle of Christ; if he can say, "Here are men and women who have accepted the truths I speak, and you can see for yourselves how much the better and happier they are for having received them,"—will not "those who are without" hold that for his strongest argument? Or if he do not *say* these things, but leaves the whole tenour of your lives to say them for him, still the force of this appeal and argument cannot fail to be felt. If when he urges men to repent, they see that you have confessed and renounced your sins; if when he beseeches them to be reconciled unto God, they see that you have been reconciled to Him; if when he exhorts them to be true, kind, pure, they see that you love and serve the truth, that you live together in charity, that you follow after holiness, must not the force of your example tell upon them, and tell for good? Will you not thus convey and commend to them the mind of Christ? But if, while professing to have received the truth as it is in Jesus, you are practically indifferent to its claims, must you not hinder and thwart the proper effect of his words, even though the speaker were an angel out of heaven instead of a weak and imperfect man? If *you* do not listen, you virtually say to others, "Why should you listen?" If *you* are not moved, you say, "What is there to move you in that?" If *you* do not obey, you say, "Why should you obey?"

Bear in mind then, I beseech you, that, as a church, a Christian community, you are, or should be, a living epistle of the living Christ. Each of you is a word, or

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a sentence, in the Letter which Christ addresses to all who worship with us or come within the range of our influence. And words, or sentences, which have no meaning, or little meaning, in themselves, often have a most noble and impressive meaning when each is in its proper place and forms part of a connected whole. No doubt our Lord often uses a single man for great ends, just as He often sends us much comfort or instruction by a single word or a single text. But, on the other hand, just as the word or the text owes much of its force to the fact that it is part of a book, so the man owes his power in large measure to the fact that he is a member of the Church ; that behind him there stands a whole community of which he is for the moment the mouth-piece and representative. It was the *whole* church at Corinth which formed the living epistle of Christ to the city of Corinth ; and it is still the entire church, and not any one member of it, which forms the living epistle of Christ to any town or neighbourhood. In so far as we are, any of us, wanting in our duty, we mar and deface the Epistle which Christ sends by and in us to our neighbours ; we prevent them from seeing as clearly as they might what Christ would have them be and do. If we would be a true and potent scripture of the grace of God, we must each be in his place, each must do his duty, like the separate words of a letter ; lest even one word blotted or missing should obscure its meaning.

We are gathered into the fellowship of Christ, not simply for our own salvation or comfort ; but that we may convey his mind and will to others, that we may

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help to quicken the new life in those who, ere long, will take our place and carry on our work. Or, as good old Cotton Mather quaintly put it :—“The Lord hath not set up churches merely in order that a few old Christians may keep one another warm while they live, and then carry away the church with them when they die ; but that they may nurse successively another generation as subjects to the Lord, to stand up in his kingdom when they are gone.”

For our neighbours’ and companions’ sake, then, as well as for our own sake, for the sake of our successors in the service and kingdom of Christ, we should pray and strive that the image of Christ may be seen in us, that his mind may dwell and be read in us : for their sake, as well as for our own, we should endeavour to make our church a scene of brotherly kindness, of earnest devotion, of stirring and constant activity in the service and pursuit of the truth. For when we thus express the mind of Christ and do his will, we may be sure that God, even our own God, will bless, and cause his face to shine upon us, and shed his love and peace into our hearts. We may also be sure that his light will shine *through* us ; and that men, seeing our good works, will glorify our Father and Saviour in heaven.

### XIII.

#### *OUR BURDEN OUR BLESSING.*

“Every man shall bear his own burden.”—GALATIANS vi. 5.

Is that a doom or a benediction? Commonly, I think, we take it as a doom—as the sentence of a judge who may be just, but is assuredly hard and austere. We do not deny that we have many consolations under the cares and sorrows of life, and are sustained by many bright hopes: but we take no pleasure, find no comfort in our burden itself. At the best we are content to bear it, if it be God's will; but we often wish that it were *not* his will, that He would graciously lift our burden from our back and leave us to pursue our way in peace.

But we shall never know the true peace, never gain an unfailing consolation and support, till we can see that our burden is itself a blessing, till we are quite as sure that it is as good of God to impose it upon us as it is good of Him to relieve us from it. And I am bold enough to think that, if you will listen to reason, I can shew you that our burden *is* our blessing, and our doom our benediction. At all events I will try to give you this great comfort under the toils, cares, and griefs of

life. And it will be best, I think, to begin on the lower plane of our business and family burdens, and so to rise to the burdens by which our spiritual life is exercised and tried.

1. It is natural for us to think that he is the happy man of business, the most capable and successful, whose affairs run smoothly and prosperously, who finds a thriving market for his wares, whose connections grow and expand without a check, and who counts a larger balance at his banker's every year. Could we choose for ourselves, I am afraid we should most of us choose to prosper and grow rich without much toil or worry or care, to live easily and sumptuously, to spend *unlaborious* days. Yet if we have lived to any purpose, we surely must have discovered before this the truth of the Copy-book maxim, that appearances are deceptive, that what looks best often proves worst for us. If we have considered our own hearts and the facts of experience, we surely have found out that it is not the smooth conduct of prosperous affairs, but the struggle with difficulties which makes the good man, and even the good man of business, which really trains him and develops his powers. A farmer, with plenty of capital and able to command such weather as he wished, might stand very well with his banker, but would hardly be respected as a wary and accomplished husbandman among his weather-beaten neighbours of the market. As we all know, it is the battle with adverse conditions, the making the most of simple or scanty means, the having to face bad weather and adverse conditions and disastrous

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changes, which develop sagacity, forethought, skill, and turn out the sagacious farmer, the experienced and accomplished husbandman. Necessity is the mother of health and strength, as well as of invention. It is as we conquer difficulties, endure adversities with a cheerful patience ; it is as we force our way through thickets of opposition ; it is as we rise by manifold effort of brain and heart and hand, though the whole world conspire to keep us down, that we acquire character, force, largeness and elevation of spirit. In fine, burdens are often blessings in disguise.

Take another illustration. Here is a man who has "come in " for a good fortune and a good business. He has not "made" either the one or the other. Those who did make the business, who watched and nurtured it from a tiny seed to a great tree with many branches, nourished and organized it so wisely that, even after they are gone, it continues, at least for a time, to grow and thrive and bring forth fruit well-nigh of itself. The man has no serious difficulties to encounter, no rubs, no hardships, no heart-tormenting cares. He lives at his ease, carelessly, luxuriously—drives down to his counting-house now and then, but gives most of his time to pleasure or to self-pleasing pursuits. Is *he* likely to be either a good man or a good man of business ? It is nothing short of a miracle if he is. How should *he* feel the gravity of life, its solemn responsibilities or even its true joys ? For want of a burden he is only too likely to leave the straight path. With nothing to bear, nothing to conquer, and not much to do, he grows

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indolent, self-indulgent, fastidious, perhaps hypochondriacal ; and, because he has no other burden, becomes a burden to himself. But here is another man who has had to "begin life for himself." Under the pressure of necessity, he has been industrious, frugal, temperate, contriving ; he knows all the ins and outs of his work ; he has mastered the secrets of his craft, studied his markets, adapted himself to the time, won a good name, inspired his neighbours with respect for his ability, with confidence in his trustworthiness. In short, his burdens have made a man of him, and a true man of business. He is likely to succeed, and to be happy in his success. Up to a certain point, let us say, he *has* succeeded. He has a good and growing business, a considerable capital embarked in it, a comfortable home, a family trained in habits similar to his own. If you set such an one talking of his past career, you soon find that he sees how much he owes to his burdens. He will tell you himself that he thanks God for the very difficulties he once found it so hard to bear, for the obstacles which stood in his way, but which he has surmounted. If he is a thoughtful Christian man, he will also acknowledge that he has gained in character, in judgment, in patience, in energy of will, in faith in God, in charity with his neighbours, by the very trials and hardships he has had to endure. Nothing, indeed, is more common than to hear "a self-made man" refer boastfully, or thankfully, to the disadvantages, the unfavourable conditions, which he has overcome, and confess that but for these, and his resolute struggle with them, he would never have been the man he is.

But now a new danger besets him. For he is very apt to think that, though past burdens have been good for him, no fresh burden ought to be imposed upon him. God's schooling, or discipline, has been very happily successful so far ; he has learned all his best lessons from it : but surely he may now be let out of school and have no more lessons to learn. That is to say, this strong man, this man whom God has made strong that he might help to carry the burdens of the world, and who owes his best happiness to his stedfast endurance of burdens, wants to be released from his true work, denied his best happiness ! Suppose that, after many thriving years, "a bad time" comes : he sees his capital ebbing away, his trade declining, his prospect overcast. And how apt he is to lose heart, or to grow impatient, to feel that it is not fair that, after so many years of faithful toil, he should be vexed with care and the fear of loss. Perhaps the very worst that can befall him is that he should have to live and work as he lived and worked twenty or thirty years ago ; but even this seems an intolerable burden to him. And it *will* be an intolerable burden unless he take it as from the hand of God, and feel that God is once more taxing his strength and patience for his good. But if he does thus take it, his burden will once more become his blessing. He will draw auguries of hope from his past experience. He will say, "After all I owe what is best in me, and the truest satisfactions I have known, to the conflict with difficult and adverse conditions. I should never have been the man I am but for being compelled to labour

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and think, to plan and endure. And these new troubles and adversities may make me a better man than I am—there is plenty of room for that—wiser, more patient and considerate, more sensible of my need of God and his comforts, more ready to part with the world I must soon leave, more fit to enjoy the world on which I must soon enter.”

Put a heavy burden on a man’s back, and at once he begins to feel his feet, to consider the road he has to tread: he begins to brace and call up all his energies for the task, to augment his strength by using it, to study the shortest path to his end, to avail himself of the best help he can get. And God, with wise and loving hand, imposes heavy burdens on us and hard to be borne, that *we* may feel our feet, and keep our path, and grow in strength, and take his help, and go the shortest way home. To business men He gives business troubles and cares, that they may feel business to be duty, that they may go to it as to a task which He has set them, that they may serve Him in it by serving their neighbours, and not to secure wealth and the means of self-indulgence at the cost of their neighbours. The stronger they are and the more patient, the heavier are the burdens they often have to bear: what else are they strong and patient for? and how can they complain of the honour God puts upon them when, by bearing the burdens which He appoints for them, they grow still more patient and strong?

*God* puts honour upon them: yes, and *men* honour them too. Look round you and consider whom *you*

honour most. The rich prosperous man, without a care ; or his poor toilworn neighbour, who struggles manfully under a weary weight of cares ? the lady lapped in luxury, or the poor widow who, driven by chill blasts from her cosy nest and the warm wings of protecting love, gathers her scanty robe about her, and cheerfully confronts the world, earning her bread with unaccustomed hands ? the millionaire, whose only toil is that of investing his gains, or the broken trader who patiently retrieves the ruined industry of years, and pays his hopeless creditors the last penny that he owes ? When we meet with bright untroubled prosperity, rolling by on soft cushions and swift wheels, we may lift our hats, and thank God that, in a world so worn with care and toil, some are exempted from its anxieties and pains. But when we meet those who shew a cheerful face under their weight of cares, and labour patiently, at an ill-paid task, with hands that ache and bleed, and go stedfastly on their way beneath a burden which bows them wellnigh to the dust,—O, then, we lay our very hearts at their feet, and thank God that in this toilsome careworn world there is something better and nobler than prosperity and success. Ancient words of benediction recur to our memories with new meaning and force, and we say, “Blessed are the poor, blessed are the meek, blessed are the sorrowful ; for in very deed they do inherit the earth, or what is best in it ; and theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The burden, which is our help, is also our honour.

2. Consider our domestic or family life. Most parents,

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I think, try to be just and kind ; but how many of them, do you suppose, frame and cherish a conscious and distinct ambition to become perfect parents—perfect father, perfect mother? Not many, it may be feared. Yet, because God, the Father of us all, is perfect in all his relations, He would have us to become perfect as parents, that we may be perfect as men. And He seeks to make us perfect by the responsibilities and cares which the parental relation involves.

Whatever else, or more, a family may be, no one will deny that it is *a burden*. The father's broad shoulders take a new weight with every child that is born to him. He must work harder ; he must think and plan and strive not for himself alone, but that he may feed, clothe, and educate his children. Most of you, fathers, have no doubt felt at times how heavy this load is, how sharp and painful is the pressure of the anxieties it entails. But you have also felt that this burden is your help and blessing. For your children's sake you rule and deny yourselves. You know very well that if you would have them grow up into good habits, *your* habits must be good ; that you cannot expect them to be punctual, orderly, temperate, industrious, considerate, kind, if you are unkind, thoughtless, indolent, passionate, disorderly, irregular. That you may train them in the way they should go, you try to keep the right way, to set them a good example. And thus they help you to acquire the very habits which make your own lives sweet and pure, to keep the only course which leads to peace on earth or in heaven. Your burden is your benediction.

But you may be good, without being perfect, parents. And, to make you perfect, God permits new troubles to befall you, imposes new burdens upon you. Despite your good example and careful training, some of your children (let us suppose so cruel a case) do not turn out what you wish them to be ; they are lazy, though you have tried to make them industrious ; self-pleasing, though you have taught them self-denial ; passionate and ungovernable, though you have striven to make them temperate and obedient ; or even vicious, though you have done your utmost to keep them pure. And as the sad conviction grows on you that your labour has been lost, that they are settling into the very habits from which you would have made any sacrifice to preserve them, your heart fails you, and you almost give up the hope of reclaiming them. This new burden is, you say, heavier than you can bear.

O weak and faithless that we are ! O thankless and inobservant ! Though every past burden has helped us, no sooner is a new and strange burden laid on us than we declare it beyond our strength. How does *God* prove Himself the perfect Father ? What is it that we most admire in his paternal goodness ? Is it that He sits among his unfallen children, shedding a heavenly bliss into their pure obedient hearts ? Is it not, rather, that He comes into this fallen world to dwell with us his prodigal and unthankful children, to suffer in and for our sins, to bear our sorrows, to pursue us with his loving-kindness and tender mercy ? Is it not, rather, that He will not cease to hope for us, however hopeless

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and wicked we may be, that He lavishes his love upon us even when we do not love Him, and saves and conquers us at last by a goodness which has no limit and will not be repelled? And how shall we be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, unless we too bear the burdens of the weak and erring, patiently endure the ingratitude of the thankless, and overcome the evil of the wicked with our good? How shall you, fathers and mothers, become and prove yourselves perfect parents, if you can only love the children that love you, if you cannot be patient with the disobedient, if you cannot take thought and pains to bring back those who have gone astray?

This new terrible burden of sorrow and care is a new honour which God has put upon you, a new call to perfection. It is because you are strong that He asks you to bear the infirmities of the weak. It is because you are capable of the most heroic tasks of love that He taxes your love, and, by taxing, strengthens and deepens it. It is because you have latent resources of wisdom which will be developed by thought and care for the erring, that He compels you to study how you may best save them from their sins. Take your burden as from God, bear it in his spirit, look to Him for courage, guidance, stedfastness; and at last, by the sufferings of wounded love and disappointed hope, you will be made perfect, and find a blessing even in the burden most intolerable to a parental heart.

3. Finally: it is in our outward crosses, in the cares and troubles of our commercial and domestic relations,

that it is hardest for us to recognize the love and goodness of God. When our cares and sorrows are more inward and spiritual, their bearing on our moral life, the help they yield toward making us complete in virtue and in holiness, is much more clear and obvious. In this interior spiritual region nothing is more common than to see the rod of judgment transformed into the sceptre of mercy, and to discover that the strokes by which we are chastened of God are only, as an old writer expresses it, "the secret and dissembled favours of his affection." In this region the connection between "burdens" and "blessings" is so obvious, so familiar, that one hardly knows what illustrations to select.

But take, for one example, the burden of mystery which lies on the sacred page. Most thoughtful men have felt its weight ; in these days, indeed, it is hardly possible to escape its pressure. When we seek to acquaint ourselves with the Truth, which is one, lo, we find it manifold ; the simple and sincere Word bristles with paradox and contradiction ; it opens up depths we cannot fathom, and suggests problems we cannot solve. Yet is not this burden a veritable blessing ? If the inspired Word were simple and plain throughout, if it were level to the meanest understanding, and disclosed its inmost secrets to the most cursory and fugitive attention, could we study and love it as we do ? It is because the simple rudiments of the Faith are girt about with awful mysteries on every hand, it is because we cannot enter on any path of enquiry without being led up heights which it is hard to climb, and finding

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broad prospects before us which we can never exhaust, that we brace ourselves to an endeavour constantly renewed, and are ever lighting on the most surprising and enchanting discoveries, or reaching forth to truths which lie beyond our grasp. Were the Bible, as some would have it be, a perfectly simple and easy book which even the most foolish wayfarer might read as he ran, instead of a vast complex library which records the august providential and redeeming work of God through all the ages of time, why should we sit down to study it? How could it be a lamp to the feet and a light to the path of every new generation, revealing ever new and larger aspects of the truth as they are able to receive them?

Or take that profound compunction for sin which at times rends and breaks our hearts. When we discover that we have basely offended against a Love which only grows more tender and pitiful the more we offend against it; or when we wake up from some treacherous illusion of the fleshly mind, and learn that we have been betrayed into a crime against the Divine Purity which should have been impossible to us, and which even we ourselves would have thought impossible in our saner moods—what sorrow, what shame, is comparable with that, what so searching, and so immedicable? What burden is so heavy, so galling, so intolerable? Yet, by the mysterious grace of God, even this burden may become a help to us, even this sorrow, immedicable as it seems, may bring healing with it. For it may make us humble, penitent, vigilant. It may constrain us to

hate evil with a more perfect hatred, and to oppose it with a more patient and enduring energy. Our sorrow may work life in us, and not death ; our shame may prove a saving shame and bring us to honour.

Or take that other burden of the Christian life than which none is more common—the burden of unsatisfied aspirations and desires. Because God is good and pure, unselfish and kind ; because, in one word, He is perfect, we also long to be perfect, to conquer self, to rise into the purity and charity without which we cannot see Him as He is nor be satisfied with his likeness. And for a little while, perhaps, we think the task, though hard, not impossible ; the aim, though high, not unattainable. But our dream soon passes ; or our ideal soon rises into lofty and remote heights inaccessible to our gross weary feet. We meant to be unselfish ; yet we are perpetually looking on our own things, and not on those of our neighbour. We long to be pure ; and yet a slight temptation suffices to cloud and defile our hearts. We are determined to be charitable ; and yet at the first provocation we quarrel with a friend, or we injure one who has injured us, instead of returning good for evil. And we feel the burden of our weakness—feel it bitterly. The contrast between our lofty aims and our low performances, our heavenly aspirations and our earthly life, humbles us to the dust. And it is well for us, my brethren, that it does. The burden that thus humbles us has been a blessing indeed. For it is the lowly whom God exalts. This is that emptiness which He has promised to fill. We are never so near heaven as

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when we bend before God acknowledging our weakness, confessing our sin. It is when we thus come back to Him, and say, "Father, we have sinned," that He falls on our neck and kisses us, and makes us welcome to the best He has.

Our whole life, then, is a bearing of burdens ; but the burdens we have to bear are, or may be, our help and our honour. When we come to unpack their contents, we find in them "treasures which wax not old," benedictions which are the very life of our life. Indeed, that old pretty legend of St. Christopher is an apt emblem of what our life is or should be. You remember how the strong man, simply because he was so strong, was set to bear burdens. Instead of being allowed to shrink into monastic seclusion, he was sent to keep the ford of a rapid dangerous stream, and to carry over the tired wayfarers who had little strength of their own. You remember how one dark wild night he heard the voice of a little child crying on him from the other side of the river. Seizing his staff, he crossed the stream, and took the child on his shoulders. As he bore him, the child grew heavier and heavier at every step, till at last the good giant and saint discovered that he bore the whole world on his shoulders, because he bore Christ, the Lord of the world. But had not the Child grown so heavy, even the giant might have been swept away by the wild rushing waters. The burden only made him plant staff and foot more firmly. The burden was his safety. And it is thus with us. The stream of life beats stormily against us as we cross

it ; the footing is slippery and uncertain ; the waves strong, the night dark. That we may be safe, and grow stronger than the waves, that we may walk warily and plant our feet firmly, burdens are laid upon us, and ever new burdens according to our need. Every burden is a cross ; but, according to that fine saying of the early Church, the Cross we bear bears us—bears us up against the stream. There is strength as well as labour in our task, discipline as well as suffering in our pain. And so at last we struggle safely through the flood, to find ourselves at home with Him who bears the burden of us all for ever. Bless God for your burdens, then, and bear them with a patient and a cheerful heart. For if I have made out my point, as I hope I have ; if I have shewn you how to find a comfort, not under, but *in* your every burden, your every care and sorrow, then there is no moment of your lives in which you need be uncomforted or unblessed.

## XIV.

### *BARUCH'S BOOK.*

“Now the king sat in the winterhouse, with the brazier burning before him. And it came to pass that when Jehudi had read three or four columns, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. . . . Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah ; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire : and there were added besides unto them many like words.”—JEREMIAH xxxvi. 22, 23, 32.

IN the long fierce conflict between Egypt and Babylon the kingdom of Judah, which lay between the two, suffered often and much. Obliged to take the part of one of the combatants, it offended both by allying itself now with the one, and now with the other. From the first the Jewish prophets recognized in Nebuchadnezzar “the servant” and “the rod” of Jehovah, and protested therefore against any alliance with Egypt, the hereditary foe of Israel. But her kings and statesmen were neither so wise as her prophets, nor would they learn wisdom from the prophets. As a rule they leaned toward Egypt, though they were often compelled to submit to Babylon.

### XIII.

#### *OUR BURDEN OUR BLESSING.*

“Every man shall bear his own burden.”—*GALATIANS vi. 5.*

Is that a doom or a benediction? Commonly, I think, we take it as a doom—as the sentence of a judge who may be just, but is assuredly hard and austere. We do not deny that we have many consolations under the cares and sorrows of life, and are sustained by many bright hopes: but we take no pleasure, find no comfort in our burden itself. At the best we are content to bear it, if it be God’s will; but we often wish that it were *not* his will, that He would graciously lift our burden from our back and leave us to pursue our way in peace.

But we shall never know the true peace, never gain an unfailing consolation and support, till we can see that our burden is itself a blessing, till we are quite as sure that it is as good of God to impose it upon us as it is good of Him to relieve us from it. And I am bold enough to think that, if you will listen to reason, I can shew you that our burden *is* our blessing, and our doom our benediction. At all events I will try to give you this great comfort under the toils, cares, and griefs of

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life. And it will be best, I think, to begin on the lower plane of our business and family burdens, and so to rise to the burdens by which our spiritual life is exercised and tried.

1. It is natural for us to think that he is the happy man of business, the most capable and successful, whose affairs run smoothly and prosperously, who finds a thriving market for his wares, whose connections grow and expand without a check, and who counts a larger balance at his banker's every year. Could we choose for ourselves, I am afraid we should most of us choose to prosper and grow rich without much toil or worry or care, to live easily and sumptuously, to spend *unlaborious* days. Yet if we have lived to any purpose, we surely must have discovered before this the truth of the Copy-book maxim, that appearances are deceptive, that what looks best often proves worst for us. If we have considered our own hearts and the facts of experience, we surely have found out that it is not the smooth conduct of prosperous affairs, but the struggle with difficulties which makes the good man, and even the good man of business, which really trains him and develops his powers. A farmer, with plenty of capital and able to command such weather as he wished, might stand very well with his banker, but would hardly be respected as a wary and accomplished husbandman among his weather-beaten neighbours of the market. As we all know, it is the battle with adverse conditions, the making the most of simple or scanty means, the having to face bad weather and adverse conditions and disastrous

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changes, which develop sagacity, forethought, skill, and turn out the sagacious farmer, the experienced and accomplished husbandman. Necessity is the mother of health and strength, as well as of invention. It is as we conquer difficulties, endure adversities with a cheerful patience ; it is as we force our way through thickets of opposition ; it is as we rise by manifold effort of brain and heart and hand, though the whole world conspire to keep us down, that we acquire character, force, largeness and elevation of spirit. In fine, burdens are often blessings in disguise.

Take another illustration. Here is a man who has "come in" for a good fortune and a good business. He has not "made" either the one or the other. Those who did make the business, who watched and nurtured it from a tiny seed to a great tree with many branches, nourished and organized it so wisely that, even after they are gone, it continues, at least for a time, to grow and thrive and bring forth fruit well-nigh of itself. The man has no serious difficulties to encounter, no rubs, no hardships, no heart-tormenting cares. He lives at his ease, carelessly, luxuriously—drives down to his counting-house now and then, but gives most of his time to pleasure or to self-pleasing pursuits. Is *he* likely to be either a good man or a good man of business ? It is nothing short of a miracle if he is. How should *he* feel the gravity of life, its solemn responsibilities or even its true joys ? For want of a burden he is only too likely to leave the straight path. With nothing to bear, nothing to conquer, and not much to do, he grows

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indolent, self-indulgent, fastidious, perhaps hypochondriacal ; and, because he has no other burden, becomes a burden to himself. But here is another man who has had to "begin life for himself." Under the pressure of necessity, he has been industrious, frugal, temperate, contriving ; he knows all the ins and outs of his work ; he has mastered the secrets of his craft, studied his markets, adapted himself to the time, won a good name, inspired his neighbours with respect for his ability, with confidence in his trustworthiness. In short, his burdens have made a man of him, and a true man of business. He is likely to succeed, and to be happy in his success. Up to a certain point, let us say, he *has* succeeded. He *has* a good and growing business, a considerable capital embarked in it, a comfortable home, a family trained in habits similar to his own. If you set such an one talking of his past career, you soon find that he sees how much he owes to his burdens. He will tell you himself that he thanks God for the very difficulties he once found it so hard to bear, for the obstacles which stood in his way, but which he has surmounted. If he is a thoughtful Christian man, he will also acknowledge that he has gained in character, in judgment, in patience, in energy of will, in faith in God, in charity with his neighbours, by the very trials and hardships he has had to endure. Nothing, indeed, is more common than to hear "a self-made man" refer boastfully, or thankfully, to the disadvantages, the unfavourable conditions, which he has overcome, and confess that but for these, and his resolute struggle with them, he would never have been the man he is.

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But now a new danger besets him. For he is very apt to think that, though past burdens have been good for him, no fresh burden ought to be imposed upon him. God's schooling, or discipline, has been very happily successful so far ; he has learned all his best lessons from it : but surely he may now be let out of school and have no more lessons to learn. That is to say, this strong man, this man whom God has made strong that he might help to carry the burdens of the world, and who owes his best happiness to his stedfast endurance of burdens, wants to be released from his true work, denied his best happiness ! Suppose that, after many thriving years, "a bad time" comes : he sees his capital ebbing away, his trade declining, his prospect overcast. And how apt he is to lose heart, or to grow impatient, to feel that it is not fair that, after so many years of faithful toil, he should be vexed with care and the fear of loss. Perhaps the very worst that can befall him is that he should have to live and work as he lived and worked twenty or thirty years ago ; but even this seems an intolerable burden to him. And it *will* be an intolerable burden unless he take it as from the hand of God, and feel that God is once more taxing his strength and patience for his good. But if he does thus take it, his burden will once more become his blessing. He will draw auguries of hope from his past experience. He will say, "After all I owe what is best in me, and the truest satisfactions I have known, to the conflict with difficult and adverse conditions. I should never have been the man I am but for being compelled to labour

and think, to plan and endure. And these new troubles and adversities may make me a better man than I am—there is plenty of room for that—wiser, more patient and considerate, more sensible of my need of God and his comforts, more ready to part with the world I must soon leave, more fit to enjoy the world on which I must soon enter."

Put a heavy burden on a man's back, and at once he begins to feel his feet, to consider the road he has to tread: he begins to brace and call up all his energies for the task, to augment his strength by using it, to study the shortest path to his end, to avail himself of the best help he can get. And God, with wise and loving hand, imposes heavy burdens on us and hard to be borne, that *we* may feel our feet, and keep our path, and grow in strength, and take his help, and go the shortest way home. To business men He gives business troubles and cares, that they may feel business to be duty, that they may go to it as to a task which He has set them, that they may serve Him in it by serving their neighbours, and not to secure wealth and the means of self-indulgence at the cost of their neighbours. The stronger they are and the more patient, the heavier are the burdens they often have to bear: what else are they strong and patient for? and how can they complain of the honour God puts upon them when, by bearing the burdens which He appoints for them, they grow still more patient and strong?

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Or take that profound compunction for sin which at times rends and breaks our hearts. When we discover that we have basely offended against a Love which only grows more tender and pitiful the more we offend against it; or when we wake up from some treacherous illusion of the fleshly mind, and learn that we have been betrayed into a crime against the Divine Purity which should have been impossible to us, and which even we ourselves would have thought impossible in our saner moods—what sorrow, what shame, is comparable with that, what so searching, and so immedicable? What burden is so heavy, so galling, so intolerable? Yet, by the mysterious grace of God, even this burden may become a help to us, even this sorrow, immedicable as it seems, may bring healing with it. For it may make us humble, penitent, vigilant. It may constrain us to

hate evil with a more perfect hatred, and to oppose it with a more patient and enduring energy. Our sorrow may work life in us, and not death ; our shame may prove a saving shame and bring us to honour.

Or take that other burden of the Christian life than which none is more common—the burden of unsatisfied aspirations and desires. Because God is good and pure, unselfish and kind ; because, in one word, He is perfect, we also long to be perfect, to conquer self, to rise into the purity and charity without which we cannot see Him as He is nor be satisfied with his likeness. And for a little while, perhaps, we think the task, though hard, not impossible ; the aim, though high, not unattainable. But our dream soon passes ; or our ideal soon rises into lofty and remote heights inaccessible to our gross weary feet. We meant to be unselfish ; yet we are perpetually looking on our own things, and not on those of our neighbour. We long to be pure ; and yet a slight temptation suffices to cloud and defile our hearts. We are determined to be charitable ; and yet at the first provocation we quarrel with a friend, or we injure one who has injured us, instead of returning good for evil. And we feel the burden of our weakness—feel it bitterly. The contrast between our lofty aims and our low performances, our heavenly aspirations and our earthly life, humbles us to the dust. And it is well for us, my brethren, that it does. The burden that thus humbles us has been a blessing indeed. For it is the lowly whom God exalts. This is that emptiness which He has promised to fill. We are never so near heaven as

when we bend before God acknowledging our weakness, confessing our sin. It is when we thus come back to Him, and say, "Father, we have sinned," that He falls on our neck and kisses us, and makes us welcome to the best He has.

Our whole life, then, is a bearing of burdens ; but the burdens we have to bear are, or may be, our help and our honour. When we come to unpack their contents, we find in them "treasures which wax not old," benedictions which are the very life of our life. Indeed, that old pretty legend of St. Christopher is an apt emblem of what our life is or should be. You remember how the strong man, simply because he was so strong, was set to bear burdens. Instead of being allowed to shrink into monastic seclusion, he was sent to keep the ford of a rapid dangerous stream, and to carry over the tired wayfarers who had little strength of their own. You remember how one dark wild night he heard the voice of a little child crying on him from the other side of the river. Seizing his staff, he crossed the stream, and took the child on his shoulders. As he bore him, the child grew heavier and heavier at every step, till at last the good giant and saint discovered that he bore the whole world on his shoulders, because he bore Christ, the Lord of the world. But had not the Child grown so heavy, even the giant might have been swept away by the wild rushing waters. The burden only made him plant staff and foot more firmly. The burden was his safety. And it is thus with us. The stream of life beats stormily against us as we cross

it ; the footing is slippery and uncertain ; the waves strong, the night dark. That we may be safe, and grow stronger than the waves, that we may walk warily and plant our feet firmly, burdens are laid upon us, and ever new burdens according to our need. Every burden is a cross ; but, according to that fine saying of the early Church, the Cross we bear bears us—bears us up against the stream. There is strength as well as labour in our task, discipline as well as suffering in our pain. And so at last we struggle safely through the flood, to find ourselves at home with Him who bears the burden of us all for ever. Bless God for your burdens, then, and bear them with a patient and a cheerful heart. For if I have made out my point, as I hope I have ; if I have shewn you how to find a comfort, not under, but *in* your every burden, your every care and sorrow, then there is no moment of your lives in which you need be uncomforted or unblessed.

## XIV.

### *BARUCH'S BOOK.*

“Now the king sat in the winterhouse, with the brazier burning before him. And it came to pass that when Jehudi had read three or four columns, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. . . . Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah ; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire : and there were added besides unto them many like words.”—JEREMIAH xxxvi. 22, 23, 32.

IN the long fierce conflict between Egypt and Babylon the kingdom of Judah, which lay between the two, suffered often and much. Obliged to take the part of one of the combatants, it offended both by allying itself now with the one, and now with the other. From the first the Jewish prophets recognized in Nebuchadnezzar “the servant” and “the rod” of Jehovah, and protested therefore against any alliance with Egypt, the hereditary foe of Israel. But her kings and statesmen were neither so wise as her prophets, nor would they learn wisdom from the prophets. As a rule they leaned toward Egypt, though they were often compelled to submit to Babylon.

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been seeking great things *for himself*, cherishing a keen personal ambition for place, eminence, authority ; and that it was the defeat of this private ambition which rendered his sorrow so poignant and intense.

Nor does this personal weakness, if duly considered, at all lessen our respect for the fidelity of Baruch. It rather tends to heighten our conception of him that, with this bitter private disappointment added to the grief of the patriot and the statesman, he should still discharge his duty to Jeremiah, and to God, with an unblenching fidelity and devotion. For what greater thing can any man do than to be true to duty amid the wreck of his personal hopes, and in the prospect of an utter ruin to his country which his fidelity will do nothing to avert ?

For this noble devotion to duty Baruch is rewarded in the noblest way. He is taught a higher duty ; a loftier ideal is placed before him ; he is called to a more difficult enterprise. God, through the prophet, warns him of a weakness which he may not have suspected, one which he may even have prided himself. He teaches him the secret of his unrest, by shewing him that he has permitted a personal and selfish ambition to blend with the more generous motives which impelled him to serve God and his country. He invites him to root out this poisonous weed from his soul, to close this rift in the lute before it makes the music mute. “ Seekest thou great things *for thyself* ? Seek them not, lest, to gain your private ends, you become unfaithful to public duty.”

Nay, more : to win him to that self-renunciation without which he could neither become perfect as man nor

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be fully equipped for the prophetic function, Jehovah supplies him with a motive he could not resist without becoming base in his own eyes. To gratify *his* ambition, Nebuchadnezzar was about to commence a series of desolating wars which would ravage the whole East, and in which Jerusalem would be turned into a ruin, Judea into a desert. Was *that* a time in which any true servant of God could occupy himself with paltry personal ambitions? Could any good man, any true patriot, indulge a craving for eminence and distinction with such a prospect before him? Ezekiel breathed the spirit of the true patriot, the true prophet, when he put from him all the ordinary shows of mourning, although the wife of his youth, "the desire of his eyes," had been taken from him at a stroke, because he had heard that the city and temple of his fathers had been destroyed.<sup>1</sup> And how could Baruch be either a true prophet or a true patriot if, with that same terrible calamity, and even greater public calamities, before him, he was bent on great things for himself, on rising to conspicuous position and ruffling in the pomp and pride of place? To cherish such an ambition, under the conditions of the time, would be base indeed; and so base an ambition could but defeat itself.

Weighty and gracious as was the appeal, it is not certain that it was successful, that it induced Baruch to cleanse his bosom of "the perilous stuff" against which he was warned. So long as he remained with Jeremiah, he seems to have been true to him. But it is an ominous

<sup>1</sup> See Volume I., Discourse on "The Death of Ezekiel's Wife."

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fact that though he was trained by Jeremiah, though he acted as his "minister" and seems to have been destined to succeed him and to carry on his work, that work was taken up, not by Baruch, but by Ezekiel and Daniel. Baruch, it would appear, was set aside, never became an independent and recognized seer, ambitious as he was of that distinction. And, probably, he was set aside for some such flaw in his character as that which Jehovah rebuked, but rebuked in vain. From the fact that certain prophetical writings appear in *The Apocrypha* which bear his name, though they were written long after he had passed away, it may perhaps be inferred that tradition reported him to be so set on posing as a prophet that he attempted to play the part, although he had no genuine inspiration ; and that later writers, taking advantage of his reputed prophetical function, attributed to him certain writings of the kind they assumed he might have composed.

In any case he stands before us as a man of fine character and rare spiritual gifts, the promise of which was marred by an admixture of baser elements. Just as the career of Gehazi was arrested by his undue love of money, so that of Baruch was arrested by his undue addiction to place and honour. He never became the man he might have been, because he was too eagerly bent on being seen of men. He lost greatness by seeking great things for himself. He lost the honour he craved by caring more for personal distinction than for the common weal. Though evil was coming on the whole earth, he must still be seeking his own advancement. And hence he

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saved nothing but his own "life," losing that which he cared for far more than life. His eye was not single, nor his heart pure from private and selfish aims: and so, with all his gifts, all his courage and fidelity, all his training and opportunities, he never became a prophet, and never achieved distinction in the service of the State.

The story of Baruch is full of wholesome admonition, especially to those who have devoted themselves to a public career. And were I speaking to politicians and public men, it might be my duty to point the moral,—that men who put their personal ambitions before the public interest and well-being, or even men who blend an eager personal ambition with a sincere devotion to the public service, and, still more, men who are capable of using public calamities to advance their private or party ends, are unworthy of the distinction they seek, whatever their gifts may be, and will do nothing great precisely because they seek great things for themselves. Most of you, however, are not professional politicians; but you help to make them; you elect the men who are to represent you whether in the local Council or in the Council of the nation. And you know very well that, in every political party or assembly, there are some who seek place or distinction mainly to serve party ends or to gratify private aspirations; while there are others who are honestly bent on serving their neighbours, on pursuing the ends of righteousness, good-will, and peace. And what the story of Baruch, and God's judgment on that story, have to say to you is this:—Shun men who

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bring a selfish or a factious heart to public work, however brilliant their gifts may be. Choose and prefer the men who are not seeking great things for themselves, but will risk their private interests, their personal reputation even, and all chance of public place and eminence, in order to say what they hold to be true and to do what they hold to be right. Value character above parts, and the desire to serve above the desire to shine.

That is a very general maxim, I admit : and of course its value lies in its application. But, after all, is it hard to apply it ? It surely is not too difficult for any man blessed with common sense to distinguish the men who are set on place, on distinction and honour for themselves, from those who are bent on serving their immediate neighbours, or the country at large, at some risk and cost to themselves.

And the distinction which holds here, holds everywhere. In every province of human activity there are those who are animated by the wish to shine, and those who are animated by the wish to serve ; those who wish to draw the eyes of men upon themselves and force their name on the public lip, and those who seek to do good and blush to find it known : those who are ruled by ambition, and those who would rather be useful than exalted ; those whose first aim is to be great, and those whose first aim is to be good. The love of fame may be, as Milton affirms, " the last infirmity of *noble* mind ;" but even he himself who, " if to covet honour be a sin," was one of the most offending souls alive, admits that it *is* an infirmity, and the last to be eradicated, though he

claims a certain nobility for the mind in which it is found. I am not about to traverse his claim. There was, as we have seen, much that was noble in the mind of Baruch, though he is now so lost to the "name and fame and use" he loved so well that many of you did not know who he was till I told you his story a week ago. And far nobler men than he, men whose names will not be forgotten so long as the world lasts, have shewn the same infirmity for a time and breathed the same ambition. The sons of Zebedee, James and John, two of the three most familiar friends of our Lord, once sought great things for themselves, and even the greatest they could then conceive; *viz.*, that they might sit the one on his right hand and the other on his left when He ascended the throne of his glory. But the Lord Jesus recognized, and taught them both to recognize and to renounce, the infirmity which prompted this desire to shine. He taught them that in his kingdom usefulness is the only road to greatness; and larger capacities and opportunities for usefulness its only reward. Whosoever would be great in his eyes must be a minister, whosoever would rule must serve; for even He Himself came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for the many. And thus He raised their clear spirits to a height which Baruch could not achieve, and to which no ambition, no love of fame, could have lifted them.

That ambition, the craving to be honoured and remembered, has been "a spur in the sides of their intent" to many, and has moved them to achievements and

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sacrifices by which the world has been bettered and enriched, I do not deny. All I have to affirm is that this is not the highest motive open to us ; nay, that it is tainted with the selfishness from which it is the office of Religion to deliver us. The true ideal and height of character is not to be found in ambition, but in serviceableness ; not in serving our neighbour for *our own* good, but in serving him for *his* good, and letting our reputation take care of itself.

And a man who is animated by this high Christian motive is very recognizable ; you know him every time you meet him : and, though you may not always like him, you cannot but respect him. Because he is not seeking great things for himself, but the highest welfare of his fellows, he does not pander to their prejudices. As you consider him, you find that he thinks for himself, and thinks often in a way which prompts him to break with the world around him, to care very little for the fashion or custom of the moment, to shew but slight respect for what is only conventionally, and not intrinsically, respectable ; to defer to truth and conscience rather than authority, to love and value both things and men for their real and enduring worth rather than for their momentary estimation, their reputed value, their power to gratify the craving for popular esteem. In fine, you become aware that he refers all things to a secret standard, walks by an inward law, a law graven on his very heart ; and hence that he has a secret and inward source of wisdom and strength on which he can fall back when his own strength and wisdom fail him.

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And thus, though the man may be of no reputation, of no eminence, and even of no distinguished gifts or attainments, with none of the vulgar claims on your respect, you cannot but respect him: you feel that he has at least the rudiments of true greatness in him; that he does really care to be good rather than great, to be useful rather than to be conspicuous, and even to *be* good and useful rather than to be thought so.

Is that an ideal altogether beyond your reach? It ought not to be beyond it; for it is not beyond the reach of any servant and lover of Christ. And if you pursue, you will reach it. If you reach it, God will not merely fling you your "life as a prey in all places whither you go;" He will rejoice that you have counted yourselves worthy of the life eternal. *He* will honour you, though you should win no honour from men. He will call you great, precisely because you have not sought great things for yourselves.

## XVI.

### *THE SON OF MAN SINGS.*

#### I.—SACRAMENTS.

“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.”—MATTHEW xxvi. 30.

THE Lord Jesus, the same night on which He was betrayed, kept the feast of the Passover with his disciples, and instituted our Paschal feast, the Sacrament of the Supper. Many sorrowful forebodings were uttered in that upper room, many earnest supplications. But sorrow and prayer were not permitted to exclude thanksgiving and song. Not until “they had sung a hymn,” or psalm, did they go out into the garden on the slope of Olivet.

Nor is it difficult to identify the hymn they sang; for we cannot doubt that He who kept the Feast as the Jews were wont to keep it, sang the hymn which they were wont to sing. Even as given by Moses the Paschal ceremony was prolonged and elaborate; but the rabbis had added many observances to the original rite. Moses had enjoined the Jews to eat the Passover *standing*, with their loins girt, their sandals on their feet, their staves

in their hands, as men who were about to be thrust out of the land, as men to whom the feast was the signal for a long and perilous flight. In after ages this posture was altered, so altered as to bring it into correspondence with their altered circumstances. At their ordinary meals the Jews either sat as we do, or, more commonly, reclined on couches, like the Greeks and Romans. But on the night of the Passover they thought it indecorous to *sit* at meat. They held themselves bound to lie on couches, and thus to mark the freedom, composure, and leisurely festal joy of the time. Nor can there be any doubt that our Lord conformed to this custom. He did not eat standing and in haste, but reclining, ungirt and unsandalled, on a couch ; as we learn from the dispute among the disciples on the washing of the feet, and from the fact that, during the Feast, John “leaned upon his bosom,” *i.e.*, reclined next to Him upon the couch of honour.

So, again, He sanctioned the use of wine at the Feast, although *that*, so far from being part of the original institution, was alien to its spirit, although it rested simply on the Rabbinical authority, which decreed that even “the poorest man in Israel was bound to drink off four cups of wine that night, yea, though he lived off the alms basket.”

So, once more, with the singing of a Psalm, or Psalms. *This* was no part of the Mosaic ordinance. It was not likely, it would not have been appropriate, that men who were waiting for the smiting of all the first-born of Egypt, and who were to take that terrible “plague” as

the signal for their perilous flight into the Wilderness, should break forth into loud hymns of praise. But in after ages, in our Lord's time, the Jews made conscience of singing the cxiii. and five following Psalms, chanting the first two of them at the commencement, and the latter four at the close of the Feast. These Psalms, called collectively *The Hallel*, were selected because they were held to celebrate the Exodus from Egypt, the Dividing of the Red Sea, the Giving of the Law, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Lot of the Messias. That is to say, they were selected because they celebrated the deliverance from the Egyptian bondage into the liberty of God's service, and because they spake of that better Exodus, the deliverance from the bondage of death into the freedom and power of life everlasting. The solemnity concluded, therefore, with the joyful words : "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee ; thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good ; for his mercy endureth for ever." And just as in other respects, so also in this, our Lord appears to have conformed to the traditional customs of the Feast. Before He and his disciples left the room in which they had kept the Passover, they sang a hymn ; and this hymn was composed, as all critics agree, of the closing strains of the Jewish Hallel.

In keeping the Passover, then, the Lord Jesus sang a hymn simply because it was the custom of the Feast, although the custom could plead no Divine command. He drank wine with his disciples, although that again was no part of the original institute. He reclined on a

couch, and lingered long over the feast, although Moses had expressly commanded that it should be eaten standing and in haste. In all these respects at least He departed from the ordinance given by Moses, although no Divine word had ever repealed or modified that ordinance or the method of its observance.

All these innovations, moreover, tended in one direction. They were not only modifications, departures from the ancient ceremonial; they were, apparently, *opposed* to its very spirit. *That* expressed agitation, surprise, haste, fear: *these* indicated ease, leisure, security, gladness. It might, therefore, have been urged with much show of reason that, in conforming to the new customs, our Lord was lending the weight of his authority to changes which not only violated the plain prescriptions of the Law, but were also alien to the whole tone and spirit of the original observance. "These symbols of rest, security, gladness," it might have been fairly argued, "are altogether foreign and opposed to the agitation, hurry, dread of the memorable night of the Exodus, which the feast was designed to hold in remembrance." Nor do I see how the force of the argument is to be evaded. If we deal frankly with the facts before us, we must, I think, admit both that, in the change of posture, the use of wine, the introduction of joyful songs, the Jews *had* given a wholly new aspect to the Feast of the Passover; and that the Lord Jesus, in adopting these new forms, not only sanctioned the change, but *recognized their right* to modify and recast the ordinances of the House of God.

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If we would understand *why* He sanctioned the change, and within what limits this right to modify ordinances and forms is to be confined, we must remember that, since the exodus from Egypt, all the conditions of the national life of the Jews had undergone a radical change. They no longer felt—why then should they feign?—the agitation and alarm with which their fathers had inevitably regarded the Exodus. Looking back on it from the safe distance of sixteen centuries, that awful night was, for them, the night on which their national life and liberties were born. It was the beginning of all good. *They* had no associations of awe and terror with it. They regarded it very much as we look back on the extortion of Magna Charta from King John, or as our remote descendants may look back on the passing of the first Reform Bill. It was the initial fact, and factor, in their existence as a people. Every blessing which freedom had brought taught them to hold it more dear, to celebrate it in a more joyful temper. Gradually and imperceptibly, their gratitude and joy gave a new form, as well as a new aspect, to the Feast. Wine and song were called in to express and heighten the joy. That is to say, new observances were added to the ancient ritual in order to bring it into harmony with the altered conditions and emotions of the people—the new additions marking the fact that, whereas the fathers kept the feast in haste and fear, their children, by the mercy of God, kept it in gladness and security. The real witnessing and teaching power of the ordinance was not destroyed, or even obscured. It still commemorated

a redemption, still recalled the exodus. Only, the tone and modes of its observance were changed to suit the changed point of view from which that exodus and redemption were regarded.

1. In this modified form, then—reclining on couches, drinking wine, singing joyful psalms—our Lord and his disciples kept the passover. And what is the lesson of their conformity to these traditional customs, which so largely modified the original ordinance, if it be not this? that the Church has a certain power over the forms in which it worships God; and that in so far as it alters ancient, or even primitive, forms only to adapt them to the new conditions and emotions of a new time, such alterations as these afford no sufficient ground for separation and schism. The Jewish Church, as we have seen, had changed the whole tone and spirit of the Paschal ordinance by its additions to the outward observance; and yet the Lord Jesus did not separate Himself from its communion, or even revert to the original form. On the contrary, perceiving that the alterations in the Ordinance brought it into correspondence with the altered conditions of the people and the time, He adopted, and, by adopting, sanctioned them.

From this principle—the right and power of the Church to adapt even the most sacred forms and modes of worship to its present circumstances and necessities—there is, I think, no logical escape, at least for those who bow to the authority of the teaching and example of Christ. And the principle is of the utmost value because it is a great *reconciling* principle, because it brings together,

or ought to bring together, good men who differ only on points of outward observance. Almost all our Protestant Churches are one in faith, one in practice, one in heart. Speaking generally, it may be said that we all believe the same truths, and walk by the same ethical rule. That which divides us is—not grave differences of creed or morals, but—our modes of Church government, or our forms of worship. And therefore our divisions are our guilt and our shame. If we are all members of Christ, we are also members one of another. We have no right to stand apart. What though some of our brethren do not observe an ordinance in what we hold to be the original mode? We may regret it. We may try to give them our point of view. But we have no right to break from communion with them, or to cut them off from communion with us. In so far as we do separate ourselves from them, we are not following the example of Christ. For there is no observance in any one of our Churches which varies so far from its original mode as the later Jewish observance of the Passover varied from the ritual of Moses. Yet Christ did not separate Himself from his brethren after the flesh, did not condemn the new forms, did not even revert to the original mode. Why, then, should we make so much of that of which He made so little?

2. *We* recognize but two ordinances or sacraments—Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Let us apply to each of them the principle we have inferred from the example of our great Exemplar and Lord. That principle, I take to be: that the Church has the right to adapt outward

forms to the changeful conditions and wants of its members, provided always that it retains the witnessing and teaching power of the original ordinance.

Baptism, then, was the initiatory rite of the primitive Church, the rite by which men were admitted to the Christian community. It was intended to mark, to signalize, the commencement of a new spiritual life. Historically, it commemorated the death and the resurrection of Christ. Spiritually, it bore witness to our death to sin, our resurrection to holiness, in virtue of our oneness with Him. So long as the Sacrament retains its original significance, so long as it is held to mark the transition to a new life, to testify to the death and rising of Christ, to set forth our death to evil and our reception of the power of an endless life—what does it matter in what form it is administered? *We* may reasonably hold that adult baptism, baptism by immersion, sets forth the historical and spiritual significance of the ordinance most effectively; and may therefore reasonably claim our freedom to administer it in this form. But if a brother—at least as wise and as devout as we are—honestly believes immersion to be unsuitable to our climate and habits, he has an incontestable right to adapt the ordinance to the changed conditions of place and time, and should be as free to pour or sprinkle as we are to immerse. Nay, even if a brother, equally wise and equally devout, honestly believes that the Christian life begins years before we think it begins, and that therefore baptism may be administered to the children whom our Lord Himself has taught us that we must

resemble before we can be of the kingdom of heaven, who are we that we should say him Nay? what right have we to separate ourselves from him? We have no more right to impose our conception of the ordinance on him than he has to impose his conception of it on us. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and be free to observe or administer the ordinance in his own way. But let no man divide the one Church of Christ because of differences of which Christ Himself made such slight account. In so far as Christian men do draw apart from each other on the mere ground of outward observance, they are untrue to the principle on which their common Master acted when He kept the Paschal feast after the modern Rabbinical, rather than after the primitive Mosaic, mode.

3. Finally: if we apply this principle to the other Christian Ordinance, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we are led to the same conclusion of charity. This Sacrament sets forth, in lively images, the Sacrifice of the Cross, the Sacrifice which took away the sin of the world and atoned men to God. Historically, it commemorates the dying of the Lord Jesus, his triumph over sin by being made sin for us, his victory over death by submission to death. Spiritually, it bears witness to our dependence on Him for salvation and life; it teaches us that we live only as we live in Him, as we feed on Him, as we receive the power of his endless life, as we become partakers of his death and of his resurrection. And so long as its historical testimony and its spiritual teaching are unimpaired, no

change in the form or method of its observance will justify schism ; no natural and suitable change even in the tone and spirit with which we come to it is to be decried. Gradually and insensibly, indeed, the Church has already modified both the mode and the spirit of the Ordinance. By the Lord Jesus and his early followers the feast was kept with unleavened bread, possibly with unfermented wine. The Apostles reclined round the board, and passed the cake and the cup to each other. They were heavy with sorrow and suspense ; the shadow of the Cross fell darkly across their spirits. Adapting our observance to the customs of our race and age, we use leavened bread and drink fermented wine. In place of lying on couches, we sit before the table which holds the bread and wine. Above all, instead of coming to the Feast with hearts oppressed by an intolerable grief and agitated to their depths with forebodings of loss, we come to it with sacred joy and gratitude, rejoicing in our salvation, adoring the Love and Mercy which endured all the pangs of death that we might be quickened into life eternal.

In short, a change has passed over the whole tone and spirit of this Ordinance similar to that which transformed the Jewish feast of the Passover from a scene of haste and fear into an occasion of joy and gladness ; while in many of the details of the observance we have departed from the primitive mode very much as they did when they substituted the recumbent for the standing posture, added the four cups of wine to the bitter herbs and sodden flesh of their fathers, and chanted six of the

most joyful hymns in the whole Psalter. And we can justify our changes on precisely the same ground on which we have justified theirs : *viz.*, on the ground that they adapt the Ordinance to the new manners and the new conditions of the time, while yet they do nothing to obscure the original meaning and intention of the Sacrament.

With these changes in view, then, how can we question the right of our brethren to make, or ask, for other and similar changes ? We have admitted, we have asserted, the right and power of the Church to modify observances. And now, if any good man, finding wine injurious to his health or believing abstinence to be his duty, asks that he may substitute water for wine, can we refuse him the cup of cold water which he asks in the name of a disciple, or reject him from our communion unless he will drink of the same cup with us ? Or if any good man protests that he holds kneeling to be a more reverent posture than sitting, and prefers to take the elements straight from the hands of the minister of the Church, are we to cut him off from our fellowship because he claims that very right of modifying ordinances which we ourselves have used ? The question has only to be asked, and considered in a Christian spirit, in the light of Christ's example, to make us ashamed of the divisions which turn on such trivial points as these. No principle is involved in them ; and nothing short of principles, in which the welfare of the Church or the world is gravely concerned, can justify us in separating ourselves from any of our neighbours who love the Lord

Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth. Nay, more, the principle here illustrated by our Lord *condemns* us if we suffer ourselves to be divided from any of those who love and serve Him on mere questions of outward form and observance.

There are other applications of this principle, other implications in my text, to which I hope to call your attention another time. Meantime, let us be content with the lesson we have already learned. No lesson could be more appropriate to the occasion. For as we draw near the table of the Lord, to commemorate his love for us all, no duty is more pressing on us than this : that we seek to clear our souls from all dividing and alienating thoughts ; that we set ourselves to be in charity with all men, and to love as many as love Him. And what is our love for them worth if it does not constrain us to feel and recognize our fellowship with them, to concede to them all that we claim for ourselves, to refuse to let any unessential difference in forms and modes of worship divide us from them ? It is the Lord of all love and grace who invites us to eat and drink with Him. Let us, then, come to his table in a gracious and loving spirit ; for he who sins against love sins against all.

## XVII.

### *THE SON OF MAN SINGS.*

#### II.—LITURGICAL FORMS.

“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.”—MATTHEW xxvi. 30.

MOSES ordained that the Paschal feast should be eaten standing, with girt loins and sandalled feet ; in short, with all the signs of fear and haste natural to men who were to be thrust out of the land in which they had been born, and to commence a long and dangerous pilgrimage through the Wilderness. Our Lord and his disciples kept the Feast reclining on couches, ungirt, unsandalled, drinking cups of wine, singing songs of praise ; in short, with all the signs of leisure, security, and gladness. The departure from the Mosaic ritual was, therefore, very marked and great. It was a change in the whole tone and spirit of the Ordinance, and not simply a modification of its outward form.

What, then, was the authority for the change? No new Divine command had been given ; no prophet had remodelled the Feast. The change, grave as it was

rested simply on custom and rabbinical authority. It would have been unnatural, it was impossible, that the Jews of later centuries should come to the Feast with genuine and unforced emotions of agitation, suspense, and alarm, such as possessed their fathers on the night of the Exodus. For *them* the Exodus meant salvation, meant national life and freedom, and was, therefore, a theme for mirth and joy. And hence the whole character of the feast was gradually changed, so changed as to bring it into correspondence with the new emotions it kindled in their hearts. It still commemorated a redemption from the house of bondage, an enfranchisement into liberty ; but the whole point of view was shifted. *They* were not men looking forward to a perilous and desperate enterprise ; but men looking back, through the safe distance of centuries, to a signal and glorious achievement. The birthnight of the nation had no terror for them ; it inspired thoughts of joy and praise. And, hence, they changed the old form of the feast, that it might express the new spirit they brought to it.

And the rabbis recognized the change, and organized a fitting expression of it. It was these grave guardians of the Law, these devout and bigoted sticklers for antiquity and tradition, who ordained that their brethren should celebrate the feast in a recumbent instead of a standing posture, that every one of them, down to the poorest, should drink four cups of wine that night, and that they should chant the joyful psalms of the Hallel before they left the room.

Our Lord Himself sanctioned, by adopting, the change.

He did not separate Himself from the communion of the Jewish Church because that Church had introduced unauthorized forms into the observance of a sacrament. Nor did He revert to the ancient and primitive form. On the contrary, He adopted the reclining instead of the standing posture, drank of the wine cup, and sang the Hallel with his disciples before He left the upper room and went out into the Mount of Olives.

Now there is a principle here—a great catholic and reconciling principle. For, by his example, our Lord admits the power and right of the Church to alter forms of outward observance, to adapt modes of worship to the new conditions and new emotions of a new time. So long as the true meaning, the spiritual teaching, of any sacrament is preserved, the form of it may be modified to suit the habits and feelings of any race, of any generation. It is not the outward letter for which He cares, or for which He would have us make a stand ; but—as we might expect—the inward spirit. If we separate ourselves from any of our brethren simply because they observe any sacrament in a different form from our own, we sin against both his spirit and his example. We have no more right to impose our forms on them, than they have to impose their forms on us. Formal differences are no sufficient ground for schism.

This principle I have already applied to the two Christian Sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I have tried to shew you that, while all our Protestant Churches depart in some measure from the modes in which these Sacraments were originally administered, no

one of them departs so far as the later Jews, in their observance of the Passover, departed from the ritual prescribed by Moses ; and that, as our Lord did not separate Himself from their fellowship, although they had altered the very character and tone of the Feast, we cannot be justified in separating ourselves from any who love Him, simply on account of the lesser departures from the original institutions which obtain among us.

Nor, I suppose, *does* any well-read and thoughtful man base himself, or his Church, on any such slight and uncertain ground as this. The convinced Nonconformist, for example, if he is studious and reflective, if he has at all grasped the method and spirit of Jesus, does not hold aloof from the Established Church because of the mode in which that Church administers the holy sacraments : but because he holds that to subordinate the Church to the State is to trench on the independence of the Church, to impair the authority of Christ, to limit and restrain the operations of that wise and gracious Spirit who is ever teaching men new truth as they are able to receive it ; to bind them down for ever to a rigid and unalterable creed ; to make the observance of certain forms *essential* to Christian communion, although, as we have seen, every race and age should be free to adapt its ordinances to its conditions and needs ; or because he holds that to establish one church is to pass a slight on all other churches, and to sink a shaft of division and alienation between good men which must inevitably range them in two opposite and hostile camps. He may be right or wrong in his contention ; for, as we are parties

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to the suit, we must not assume to be its judges and to give sentence in our own favour ; but, whether right or wrong, he is worthy of all respect, for he is basing himself *on principles*, and not on the mere outward forms on which our common Lord and Master leaves every man free to frame his own conclusions, and to adapt them to his own use, provided always that he does not rob them of their true meaning and witness.

1. But this same Principle has still other applications to our modern divisions and strifes. It bears on much besides the Christian Sacraments, and our freedom to observe them in various modes. Among Protestant Dissenters, for example, there is a grave prejudice against liturgical forms of worship. Many did not, and there are still some who do not, hesitate to pronounce them unlawful and wrong, opposed to the spirit and tenour of the Gospel teaching, if not to its letter. The prejudice sprang up, no doubt, at the time when here in England the worship of God was in no small danger of sinking into a mere formality, when, as our historians tell us, religion was mainly a form of godliness, without its power ; when many of its ministers were worldly, and some of them profane, men, who gabbled through the services of the Church without any sense of their beauty, without feeling or kindling any devout emotion. And, no doubt, with the rising spiritual life and energy of the Church, this prejudice is dying out ; and most of us now admit that God may be as sincerely worshipped in prescribed forms of prayer and praise as in the simple and unstudied utterances of a pious heart. There are even

some among us who would be glad to combine the two ; while there are others who still prefer the one or the other for their own use, and still others who in their inmost hearts believe that one of the two must be wrong and the other right.

The case is easily resolved, if we are content to submit to the authority and example of Christ. Liturgical forms of worship cannot be wrong, however inexpedient we may think them ; for our Lord used them every time He went to synagogue or temple. Nor was it only Divinely inspired, or Divinely appointed, forms which He used. For we are here told that He sang the Jewish Hallel with his disciples, albeit to sing Psalms at the Passover was a modern and rabbinical innovation on the ritual prescribed by Moses. Simply because the Jews had introduced this form, to make the Feast more expressive of the emotions they brought to it, He was content to conform to it, to adopt it. Nay, He Himself has given us one form of Prayer, which we all use and teach our children to use. Nay, more, He took every sentence of what we call The Lord's Prayer, from the liturgical services of the Hebrew Temple, where they may still be found, and simply made them into a new and Christian prayer by the Divine wisdom with which He selected and combined them.

It is idle of us, then, to contend that liturgical forms of worship are wrong, that they are condemned by the general tone and spirit of the Gospel, when our Lord Himself both used a form and gave us a form by which we may draw near to God. It would be as inconsistent,

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as idle, for *us* to urge that contention, since we use not only the Lord's Prayer, but Grace before Meat, Hymns of Praise, the Benediction, Marriage and Funeral Services : and those who employ forms in their saddest, their happiest, and their most devotional, hours can neither with any show of reason pronounce it wrong to use them, or pronounce it right to make the use of them a ground for schism and strife.

On the other hand, if any man say, " I find set forms a hindrance to devotion rather than a help ; I grow tired of repeating the same words day after day and week after week ; when they are familiar to me, they call up no clear image, quicken no spiritual impulse within me ; I instinctively resent being compelled to ask for much which I do not really feel that I want, and being prevented from asking for what I really require and wish,"—he is clearly within his right, for the same Lord, who often used forms, often dispensed with them ; and He has recognized the right of the Church in every age to adapt its modes of worship to its conditions and needs. In short, if we once regard this question as a question of principle, in the light of the teaching and example of Christ, we see that, in themselves, forms and modes of worship are right and wrong only as they promote or hinder the growth and expression of the spiritual life, only as they foster or fail to foster a devotional spirit. We are led to the old conclusion of charity : " Let every man be free, and let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that useth forms of worship, let him use them unto the Lord ; and he that useth them

not unto the Lord, let him abstain from them." "Spirit is eternal—Form" is transient ; and when men stereotype form and call it perpetual," or deny that the selfsame truth of thought or truth of feeling may express itself under many different forms, they simply betray their ignorance of History and their lack of sympathy with the teaching and example of Christ. The Jews expressed reverence by uncovering the feet ; we express it by uncovering the head. Does it matter which form we employ, so that our reverence for God be deep and sincere ?

2. One of the commonest objections to the constant use of stated forms of Common Prayer is, that at times they must inevitably jar upon our feelings, compelling us, for example, to take words of joy and praise on our lips when our hearts are full of grief, or to utter penitent confessions of sin and imploring cries for mercy when our hearts are dancing with mirth and joy. But if we mark the conduct of our Lord and his disciples, we cannot say that even this objection is final or fatal. He and they were about to part. He was on his way to the agony of Gethsemane and the shame of the Cross. Their hearts, despite his comforting words, were heavy with foreboding and grief. Yet they sang the Hallel, used the common form of praise, before they went out,—He to die for the sin of the world, and they to lose all hope in Him as the Saviour of Israel. No Divine command, nothing but the custom of the Feast, enjoined this form upon them ; yet they do not cast it aside. And this "hymn" was no dirge, no slow and measured cadence,

no plaintive lament, but a joyous song of exultation. There are no brighter and more exulting songs than those which compose the Hallel in the whole Psalter. It is called the Hallel because its master-word is Hallelujah—"a sort of holy hurrah," as a quaint commentator explains the word. It abounds in such Verses as these: "Hallelujah. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, let the name of the Lord be praised: . . . Hallelujah. The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore: Hallelujah. O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever: Hallelujah." While the final Psalm of the Hallel, the cxviii.,—too long to quote—is just one continuous strain of the most gladsome and varied thanksgiving. It was natural that such Psalms should be chosen to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt, the national deliverance from bondage into liberty. It would not be unnatural were we to sing such glad songs at our Passover, when we commemorate the death which delivereded us from our bondage to evil into the liberty of obedience to the Divine Will, into the peace and joy of life everlasting. But must not these tones of irrepressible hope, of joyous and exultant trust, have jarred on the hearts of men who were passing into a great darkness in which all the lights of life and hope and joy

were to be eclipsed? If our Lord could look through the darkness and see the joy set before Him, the disciples could not. Yet they too joined in this joyous Hymn before they went out into the darkest night the world has ever known.

With their example before us, we cannot fairly argue that settled forms of worship are to be condemned simply because they jar on the reigning emotion of the moment. We must rather infer that, in his wisdom, God will not leave us to be the prey of any unbalanced emotion; that, when our hearts are most fearful, He calls on us to put our trust in Him; that when they are saddest, He reminds us that, if we have made Him our chief good, our chief good is still with us, whatever we may have lost, and that we may still rejoice in Him, though all other joy has departed from us.

And how is this inference, this conclusion of faith, confirmed by the example before us! The night of the world's deepest darkness did but usher in a new and brighter dawn. By death Christ conquered death, for Himself, and for us all. The disciples lost all things only that all things might become theirs, and ours. Could they have foreseen the issue of their sorrow and strife, would any songs have been too full of joy and mirth to express the gladness with which they would have hailed it? But God *did* foresee that issue. Their Hymn was truer than they knew, but not truer than He knew it would prove to be. And when He bids us trust in Him in every night of loss and fear, and even to be glad in Him however sorrowful our souls may be,—O how

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comforting and welcome the command should be ! for it is nothing less than an assurance that He sees the gain which is to spring from our loss ; it is nothing short of a pledge that He will turn our sorrow into joy.

3. Trust, hope, joy, however, may be expressed in words, as well as in songs. Yet our Lord and his disciples were not content to recite the Hebrew Hallel ; they chanted it. Why? Simply, I suppose, because song is a fitter, a more complete and perfect, vehicle of joyful emotion than speech. And Song implies both poetry and music. Both poetry and music, therefore, are sanctioned and consecrated by our Lord's use of them.

Both have been suspected by the Church at times, if not condemned ; and that not without reason. We have only to remember the base uses to which the poets of the Restoration period, for instance, prostituted their genius, to understand why the virtuous and godly people of the realm revolted against an art which had allied itself with vice and tyranny. We have only to remember the persecutions which the Puritans suffered at that same period, how they were compelled to meet by stealth and at the risk of fines, imprisonment, and mutilation, to understand why they ceased to sing when singing would have betrayed them to their foes. And as "custom doth breed a habit in a man," and every thoughtful man attempts to justify his habits, it is not wonderful that, even when times changed and they were free to worship where and as they would, many of their descendants persuaded themselves that the singing, which they had so long disused, was unlawful and unscriptural. That persuasion

lingered, in some branches of the Church, down to our own time. I can faintly remember hearing, some fifty years ago, of English congregations in which singing was still forbidden and disapproved, even the singing of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs;" while, in Scotland, there are many Congregations in which, though David's psalms are sung, or a poor version of them, certain instruments of music, such as David himself used freely, are still held to be unworthy of use in the sanctuary of the Lord.

But though our fathers were familiar with "a Hymn controversy," and their fathers shrank from poetry as profane, and we ourselves have heard something of "an Organ controversy," there are but few intelligent men to-day who do not admit poetry to be the most perfect expression of the highest thoughts and the purest emotions, or who do not delight themselves in all forms of music, vocal and instrumental, and hold that these noble forms of art are never so well employed as when they are used in the service of Religion. If they needed any justification, they might find it in the fact, that on the night of his betrayal, the eve of his crucifixion, the Lord Jesus and his disciples chanted, in musical strains, the noblest poetry they knew.

There was a time when what, with all respect for them, I must call a slightly idiotic expression was frequent on the lips of good men. How often have we heard them say, and say to discourage even honest mirth and simple natural gladness: "We *are* told that Jesus wept; we are *never* told that He smiled." There

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are many things which we are not told of Him, lest the world should not be able to hold the book that should be written. But though we are not *told* that He smiled, may we not be sure that He did—answering his mother's smiles with his own, smiling on the little children whom He took in his arms and caressed? And, in any case, we *are* told that He *sang*, and sang the most joyful songs in the national song-book, sang them even on the darkest day of his life. We *are* permitted to hear Him speak again and again of “my joy,” and to listen as He attempts to make his disciples sharers in that joy. And, my brethren, if we are his true followers, if we believe the truths He came to teach, and cherish the hopes He came to give, there is no reason why we should not resemble those early disciples who ate their daily food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and winning favour among all their neighbours by the purity, simplicity, and joyfulness of their daily lives. Songs should be more native to our lips, and more habitual, than sighs. For we never have so great cause for sorrow but that we have still greater cause for thankfulness; and the chords of the soul never give out such sweet and holy music as when they are attuned to praise.

Finally, we are once more reminded that Religion is a thing of principles, not of forms; spirit, not letter. It is a life, a life which reveals itself in various ways under all the changes of time, a life which consecrates every faculty we possess to the service of God and man. It uses forms, but is not dependent on them. It may modify them in a thousand different ways, to suit them

to the wants, emotions, aspirations of the soul. There was a most true and sincere religious life, for example, among the Hebrews, and under the laws of Moses. Worship then took the form of offerings and sacrifices, fasts and feasts. All these, in so far as they were Hebrew and were specially adapted to Hebrew life, have passed away ; but the religious life has not passed with them. It has clothed itself in simpler and more universal forms. *Our* worship expresses itself in prayers, hymns, sacraments, and above all in the purity and charity which bids us visit the poor and needy in their affliction and keep ourselves unspotted from the world. In due time, these forms may be modified or pass away. But the life which works and speaks through them will not pass away. It will simply rise into higher and nobler forms of expression. No man, therefore, can live and grow simply by adhering to forms of worship and service, let him be as faithful and devoted to them as he will. They may feed and nourish life, but they cannot impart it. They will change and pass, but the life of the soul need not therefore suffer loss. If that life has once been quickened in us through faith and love, it will and must live on, for it is an eternal life, and continue to manifest itself in modes that will change and rise to meet its new necessities and conditions.

Religion accepts us as we are, that it may raise us above what we are ; it employs and consecrates all our faculties, that our faculties may be refined, invigorated, enlarged in scope. If we can speak, it bids us speak. If we can sing, it bids us sing. If we can labour and

endure, it bids us labour and endure. If we can only stand and wait, it teaches us that they also serve who only stand and wait. Whatever we can do, it bids us do heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men, and yet do for men, that it may be unto the Lord. If we really have this life, it will reveal itself in us as it did in Him who is our Life. It will reveal itself in a love too profound and sincere to be repelled by any diversities of outward form ; in a spirit of praise too pure and joyous to be quenched by any of the changes and sorrows of time ; and in an earnest consecration of our every capacity and power to the service of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us, and for all.

## XVIII.

### *THE GOSPEL TO THE GREEKS.<sup>1</sup>*

#### I.—INTRODUCTION.

“Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast : these therefore came to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew ; Andrew cometh, and Philip, and they tell Jesus. And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.”—JOHN xii. 20-23.

EVEN in the history of our Lord Himself there are few incidents more striking and suggestive than the visit of “certain Greeks” to Him during the last week of his earthly ministry. They came to Him at the moment in which the Jews had finally broken with Him, and He had been constrained to denounce wrath and tribulation and anguish on the very people He came to save. The advent, the adhesion, of these Greeks to the Christ whom Israel had rejected, was an omen of vast significance : it

<sup>1</sup> The first four of these Discourses are reprinted, with certain additions and alterations, from *The Expositor* (Second Series, vol. vii.), in order that I might complete the set by four other Discourses on the same theme.

was, as Bengel has said, "the prelude to the transition of the kingdom of God from the Jew to the Gentile."

Striking and portentous as the incident was, it has not received the attention it deserves. It lies in the shadow of the Cross. It is eclipsed by the close neighbourhood of the supreme achievement in the history of Christ,—that laying down, that losing, of his own life, by which He saved the life of the world. On the brink of that divine catastrophe we find it hard to pause and consider the events which immediately preceded it, however momentous and significant they may be. And yet *this* event will well repay the consideration it demands. Manifestly it is marked out, as by the finger of God, for special consideration. As at the Baptism, and again at the Transfiguration, so now, while Jesus shews Himself and speaks to the Greeks who came seeking Him, a voice from Heaven is heard, bearing witness to the beloved Son. And this Voice, like that heard on the Mount and by the River, comes to call attention to a critical and far-reaching event, an event too which has a special claim on *us*, since it is nothing less than the throwing open of the gates of the kingdom of heaven to the Gentile world, Christ's first and sole proclamation of his gospel to the Greeks.

Probably this was the last event of a day crowded with events. Not improbably even, it was "the conclusion of Christ's public ministry,"<sup>1</sup> and so comes to us charged with new significance. But in any case we shall hardly enter into its meaning, or feel its power, unless

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus*, Vol. ii. p. 389.

we glance at the incidents which led our Lord to sum up his gospel in a few pregnant sayings, which embrace all that is essential and distinctive in his teaching, for the instruction of these inquiring Gentiles.

On the third day, then, of the week in which He tasted death for us all, the Lord Jesus stood in the Court of the Women, his favourite resort in the Temple, as it was also that of any Jew who had a word to say to the people, since in this Court, open to both sexes, most of the public assemblies were held. Most of his disciples were with Him ; and through a long and weary day He had been speaking to them, and to the Jews who gathered round them, of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. As the evening fell, He was still teaching and preaching in the Temple ; but now Philip, absent from the group for a time, seems to have been hurrying through the Court of the Gentiles—which lay next to but below the Court of the Women—on his way to rejoin his Master and his brethren. This lower court was divided from the higher and more sacred enclosures of the Temple by a stone fence, on the posts of which slabs were affixed—one of these slabs, still in a legible condition, has been recently discovered—bearing the inscription : “No alien must pass within this fence. If any one be caught doing so, he must blame himself for the death that will ensue.” Philip was not an alien, but a Jew ; and therefore he was at liberty to pass the fence and climb the stairs which led up into the Court of the Women. But before he reached the steps he was intercepted by certain Greeks—Hellenes, not Hellenists—

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who were in the habit of coming to Jerusalem in order to worship at the Feast, and who must therefore have been among those foreign converts to the Hebrew faith known as "proselytes of the Gate." As they could not get to Him, for, being Gentiles, they dare not pass the fence, they begged Philip, if it were possible, to bring Jesus to them.

We are not told who these men were, or from whence they came. But tradition affirms that more than one effort was made—notably by the King of Edessa—to induce Jesus to leave the hostile and ungrateful Jews, and to take up his residence in some foreign court, where He was assured of an honourable welcome. And it may be that these Greeks—for Greeks were to be found in every Court—were ambassadors from some such prince, and came on some such errand as this. Or it may be that they themselves were persons of wealth and distinction who, seeing that Jesus had finally broken with the Jews, and knowing that the Pharisees were compassing his death, sought to save Him from their hands by offering Him an asylum beyond their reach. Or, again, it may be that they had been so impressed by his words and deeds, that they had resolved to attach themselves to Him, and to share his fate, whatever it might be. Only the day before, He had driven from the Temple the money changers who defiled it with their traffic and chicanery, and rebuked them for degrading into a "den of thieves" the Sanctuary which God intended to be "a house of prayer," not for the Jews only, but "*for all nations.*" These

Greeks may have been impressed by his courage, his purity, his liberality. They may have felt that though Himself a Jew, He was the Friend of all men, *their* Friend. They may have wished to confer with Him, and to learn *how* He proposed to convert the Hebrew Temple into an universal Sanctuary.

Whatever their immediate motive and intention, there can be no doubt that there was far more in their advance to Christ than lies on the surface of this narrative. For, first, their words, the words rendered, "we would see Jesus," not only imply a very strong desire to see Him; they also mean, "We have *decided on* seeing Jesus," and seem to imply either that there had been some strife and debate in their own minds before they reached that decision, or that they had discussed the matter with Philip before, and had only just determined what they would do.

Nor, again, was it only a *sight* of Jesus which they wished to obtain, such a long lingering gaze as men love to bend and fix on the great and mighty. They could have had that, probably they had had so much as that, as He went in and out of the Temple and passed through the court in which they worshipped. What they asked for was a formal interview with Him, a conference in which they might open their minds to Him and hear what He had to say in reply. Hence it was, I suppose, that Philip was so deeply impressed by their decision. To him it seemed so important that he did not venture to take it straight to Christ. He first goes and consults Andrew, who was on more intimate terms

with Him, as one of the first four among the Twelve. And then, as we are told with a ceremonious formality which denotes the importance of the occasion, Philip having come and told Andrew, Andrew and Philip—the only two of the Apostles who bore Greek names, and therefore fitting ambassadors for Greeks—tell Jesus. Nay, Jesus Himself, ordinarily of so calm and serene a spirit, is much more profoundly impressed and moved than his disciples. To Him, the decision of these Greeks is at once as the stroke of doom and the harbinger of victory. He reads in it a sign that the hour is come in which He must glorify God by dying for men, and be glorified by God by being made the Victor over death, and the Saviour of the world. He finds in it nothing less than the “crisis of the world”—an omen of the utter defeat of the usurping prince of this world, and a promise that all men shall be drawn to Him, the world’s true Prince and Lord.

The whole tone and all the details of this brief narrative, therefore, mark the event as one of the deepest and most extraordinary moment; and we are compelled to find in the request of these Greeks far more than meets the ear.

St. John, to whom we owe our only record of this memorable and significant incident, does not tell us in so many words how the Lord Jesus responded to their request. But we can hardly doubt that He who was full of grace acceded to it; that He came down into the Court of the Gentiles, in which they perforce awaited Him, and spoke with them face to face. Indeed all the

critics are agreed that in Verses 23-26 we have the substance of what He said to them. In the parable of the grain of wheat, which is fruitful only in death ; in the paradox on losing one's life in order to save it ; in the promise that as many as serve and follow Him here shall hereafter be with Him where He is ; in the prediction that by his death on the Cross He will draw all men to Himself—in all of which we find one dominant and uniting thought, that of gain by loss, life by death, joy by sorrow—He sums up in a few sentences what was most precious and distinctive in the gospel which He had taught at large among the Jews. And, as if to round the whole circle, as if to give these Greeks a veritable and complete gospel all to themselves, however brief it might be, miracle is added to parable and paradox, promise and prediction, and a great voice from heaven—loud as thunder, but sweet as an angel's song—confirms and ratifies all that He had said to them.

He assumes throughout that they offered themselves to his service, that they wished to enroll themselves among his followers and disciples, that they had come to Him for the eternal life which He professed to bestow. To his disciples He had often repeated the strange paradox, that they could only find their lives by losing them, only rise into eternal life through death. And now He affirms that this strange law of life is the only law of life, whether in the natural or in the spiritual world. It is the law of his own life as well as of theirs ; and it must be the law of all who would follow Him. That is the true life, He says virtually, which can

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quicken life. But to give life, we must expend life ; we must give it out or give it up. The corn of wheat must die that it may live and multiply. The Son of Man must die that He Himself may truly live, and that He may give life to the world. And all who follow Him must follow Him in this—they must die to live. But if they submit to this law, they shall have life indeed, the true life, the life that cannot die. *They* are as welcome to Him, and to his eternal life, as though they were children of Abraham ; nay, more welcome, for they are the representatives of the whole race of man, and not of a single family alone.

These two seem to have been the leading thoughts or emotions of Christ as He gave these Greeks the interview they had sought. First, the hearty welcome He could now offer, not to the house of Israel only, but to men of every name and race. And, second, deep and devout exultation that his salvation was to be wide as the world, co-extensive with the whole family of man. The first finds utterance in such phrases as these : “If *any* man (Jew or Gentile) serve me, him will my Father honour,” and “I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all* men unto me” : while the second reveals itself in the exclamation, “Now is the *crisis* of this world ; now shall the prince of this world be cast out,” and “the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.”

There is a tone of wonder, as well as of joy, in these exclamations, as if the Son of Man Himself were astonished at the greatness of his work, at its scope or its success ; as if in the advent of these Greeks He

beheld the unfolding of a divine purpose of which He had not always been fully conscious, which He had only clearly recognized as He "grew in wisdom and knowledge" by the teaching of labour and experience. And, indeed, we have many indications that that extension of his work and kingdom to the whole Gentile world, in which He here exults, had not always been present to his consciousness, though it had always been embraced in the purpose of God; that it dawned and grew upon Him as He walked with men, as He met new claims on his grace and felt new impulses of love arise within his heart. "Though he was a Son, he learned . . . by the things which he suffered;" and, among them, by that conflict between Love and Duty which He shared with us.

Of this growth in wisdom and clearness, this "learning," what the will of God was and how much it embraced until, as here, He saw that it contemplated nothing short of the redemption of the whole world, and could exult in the fact that the Salvation which was "of the Jews," was for the Gentiles also, we have one very familiar and suggestive illustration. Many months before these Greeks decided to see Him, Jesus, wearied by incessant and ill-rewarded toil, had retired from Judea, beyond his beloved Galilee even, to the borderland of Phoenicia, seeking rest, though He found none. For here there came to Him a woman whom St. Mark calls a Greek, *i.e.*, a Gentile, a heathen, but who St. Matthew tells us was a Canaanite by birth.<sup>1</sup> Now the Canaanites

<sup>1</sup> Mark vii. 24-30; Matthew xv. 21-28.

were not only heathen ; they were the one heathen race on which a curse had rested for ages ; they had been dispossessed of the Promised Land by divine command ; they were disqualified by a rigorous and binding prohibition from ever becoming members of the Holy Congregation. A swarthy mother of this accursed race comes to Christ and begs a boon of Him, beseeching Him to heal her afflicted daughter. By this appeal she brings before Him, in its extreme and most difficult form, the question, whether He is the Saviour of all races or only of one. And there is an apparent rudeness and harshness in his response to her prayer which has always perplexed the Church, so unlike is it to his usual strain. But the reason why He is so unlike Himself is, in all probability, that her appeal has quickened a strife between love and duty in his heart by which for the moment He is bewildered. He was not sent, so at least He felt, save to the House of Israel. How, then, can He take the bread from the children of the House, who sit at the Father's table, even to give it to the household pets <sup>1</sup> who lie and beg under the table ? Love prompts Him to respond with bounty to the pitiful appeal ; Duty forbids Him so to respond to it.

And this sense of duty, which looks so strange to us —strangest of all in Him—was nevertheless based on a

<sup>1</sup> Our Lord by the use of the diminutive *kunarion* indicates that He is not speaking of the prowling scavenger of the streets, which was held in dislike and contempt by the Jews ; but of the trained and familiar companion of the household ; and this takes some of the harshness from his tone.

large and wide induction. For nineteen centuries it had been the method of God to confine the special revelations of his mercy to the House of Israel. It had been his method, *i.e.*, to provide for the ultimate salvation of the world by saving and blessing one family, one people ; by storing up in them an energy by which all the families of the earth should be saved and blessed. From the call of Abraham to the advent of the Messiah, the Hebrew race had been chosen and prepared for this high function. And not, without reason. A supernatural revelation could not have been made to every nation and every family without reversing or superseding the natural order : the air would have been darkened with perpetual miracles. In his divine economy, therefore, an economy which characterizes all his works, God selected one nation to be the depositary of the heavenly treasure which was ultimately to enrich the whole family of man. Till this revelation was complete, it was reasonable that it should be confined to a single spot, to a single race. Nor would it be complete till Christ had accomplished his mission, finished his work. Till then, therefore, it was but natural He should feel that He was sent only to the House of Israel, that He could not step beyond its limits without departing from the Divine method and violating the will He came to do. These limits might at times irk and gall his tender compassionate spirit. He might at times long to use his power for the benefit of men and women of other than the chosen race. He *must* have longed to help and comfort this poor Canaanitish mother. But dare He do

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it? Could He do it without overstepping his commission, without doing violence to the method which his Father had patiently followed through long centuries?

It was only the extraordinary and astonishing faith of the woman, it would seem, which suggested to Him that the Will of God must be even larger, kinder, freer, than He had assumed, and so reconciled for Him the warring claims of love and duty. By a wonderful stroke of wit, which could only have sprung from the pressure of love and anguish, she catches Him in his own net, entangles Him in his own words, meeting his rebuke, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs," with the retort, "Yea, Lord; but even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." She admits, *i.e.*, his method of interpretation, admits that He is sent to Israel first, or even only; but she cannot and will not think so poorly of God as to believe that the Father of all will grudge any kindness that can be shewn to any creature that He has made. And by her faith in the illimitable mercy and compassion of God, she extorted the admiration of the Son of Man, and taught Him that duty can never be at war with love, that to shew kindness and do good can never be to violate the will of God. Hence He yields to her request, and cries, "O woman, great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Women should be proud of the woman who, by her invincible faith in the Love that rules the universe, became one of the teachers of the Great Teacher; nor should men, however logical their temper, find any

difficulty in believing that He who learned something even from the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, and much more from every child and woman and man He met, learned obedience to a Will even larger than his own from this loving and afflicted mother; for was not her anguish one of "the things which he suffered?"

But, O, how far had the man Christ Jesus advanced in his recognition of the loving and redeeming purpose of the will of God, in the months which intervened between his interview with the Syro-Phoenician woman and his conference with these inquiring Greeks in the Temple! There is no trace of agitation, or of hesitation, in his bearing now, no fear lest in admitting *them* to his grace He should be overstepping the bounds of his commission and violating the will of the Father who sent Him. So far from being bewildered between the rival claims of love and duty, He does not even pause to note that these claims can never be opposed. So far from asking whether He had been sent to find and save any but the lost sheep of the House of Israel, He is sure that the true temple must be a house of prayer for all nations. So far from doubting whether He has gifts for the Gentiles also, He sees in the coming of the Greeks a sign that his work is accomplished, his victory won, and exults over the proof they bring Him that the hour has struck in which He is to be glorified. He opens his arms, and his heart, to the whole world, and rejoices that all men are to be drawn to Him, that all are comprehended in the saving power and love of God.

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The fundamental and dominant thought of the Gospel which Christ Himself delivered to the Greeks is this—that death is the inevitable condition of life: and this thought pervades his whole discourse and finds expression in paradox, in parable, in promise, in prediction. The Son of Man must die, He says, both that men may live, and that He Himself may be lifted up into a higher life. His disciples must follow Him in the way of the Cross, *i.e.*, they must die with Him, if they would rise with Him into life eternal. Nay, every man, if he would not lose his life must hate his life; *i.e.*, he must hold mere living in generous scorn if he would reach the true ends of life. And this law, which pervades the whole round and structure of human life, runs also throughout the physical universe, in which even a grain of wheat cannot breed and multiply unless it fall into the earth and die. Everywhere, death is the condition of life, or of more life and fuller. Everywhere, the lower forms of life fulfil their end and aim in being lost that, from them, higher and more fruitful forms of life may spring.

This was the dominant theme, as of his Gospel to the Jews, so also of his Gospel to the Greeks. And, in our next Discourse, we must mark how it was varied and wrought out.

## XIX.

### *THE GOSPEL TO THE GREEKS.*

#### II.—THE PARABLE AND THE PARADOX.

“Verily, verily (literally, Amen, amen), I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”  
—JOHN xii. 24, 25.

ONLY two days before He died for us all, and in death found a path of life for us all, the Lord Jesus summed up his whole Gospel, in a few terse sentences, for the benefit of certain Greeks who had decided to see Him, and to cast in their lot with Him at the very moment in which the Jews had rejected Him. This Gospel, or Sermon, to the Greeks contained, as I have said, a parable, a paradox, a promise, and a prediction, while it was sanctioned and confirmed by a miracle—the great voice out of heaven which to some was loud and unintelligible as a peal of thunder, while to others it was sweet and mystic as an angel’s song. One thought dominated the whole discourse; *viz.*, that death is the invariable condition of life. The Son of Man must die both that men may live, and that He Himself may be lifted up

into a higher life. His disciples must follow Him, taking up his cross if they would share his crown and glory, dying that they may truly live. Nay, every man, if he would not lose his life, must hate his life; *i.e.*, he must hold mere living in generous scorn if he would reach the true ends of life. And this law, which pervades the whole round and structure of human life, runs also throughout the physical universe, in which even a grain of wheat cannot breed and multiply except it fall into the earth and die. Everywhere, death is the condition of life, or more life and fuller. Everywhere, the lower forms of life fulfil their end and aim in being lost that, from them, higher forms of life may spring.

This was the ruling theme, as of his Gospel to the Jews, so also of his Gospel to the Greeks. We can only for the present deal with the two earlier illustrations of that theme; (1) that of the Parable; and (2) that of the Paradox.

I. The Parable (Verse 24) is introduced with that solemn "Verily, verily" which St. John has made familiar to us on the lips of our Lord. On his lips this formula is used to call attention to truths of exceptional moment and depth, truths which command the "amen," or assent, of his whole nature, truths often which did not lie on the surface, but beneath the surface, of the words He was about to utter; truths which might be very repugnant to the minds, habits, inclinations of those who listened to them, and which needed therefore to be the more earnestly pressed on their attention.

Nor is it at all difficult to see why He laid special and weighty emphasis on the fact—that death, self-surrender, self-renunciation, self-sacrifice, is the condition of all life, or why He called the special and earnest attention of the *Greeks* to it. For not only is the truth itself a fundamental truth of his Gospel and kingdom, lying at the very root both of Christian theology and Christian experience, and finding its supreme expression in the Cross; not only is it repugnant to man's general bent and inclination—for who cares to impose on himself either a yoke or a cross? but it also ran right in the teeth of Greek thought and civilization. Self-culture and self-enjoyment were the master words with the Greek—the chief good of human life, the supreme aim, the ruling bent of the whole Grecian world, as we may learn from their literature, their art, their political economy, their social and civic institutions; from which we may also learn how miserably, in pursuing this aim, they fell short of the ends for which man was created and made. So that in calling them to substitute self-renunciation for self-culture, and self-sacrifice for self-gratification, the Lord Jesus was virtually asking them to reverse the whole bent of their thought and conduct, and to set before themselves an ideal the very opposite to that which they had hitherto pursued. No wonder, then, that He opened his discourse with this solemn “Verily, verily,” forewarning them by his very tone and manner how heavy was the task, how arduous the achievement, how radical the change, to which He summoned them. Not that He disapproved either of

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culture or enjoyment; all He demanded was—as we shall see—that the culture should tend to maintain and develop the spiritual life in man, and that the enjoyment should be cheerfully sacrificed, if need were, to the higher claims of duty.

Even this, however, was a grave demand to make on men who had been bred to love culture for its own sake, and enjoyment for its own sake, and to place them above the pursuit of truth, righteousness, and charity. To call on them to use their culture for the welfare of “the common herd,” and to give up any enjoyment which could be secured only at the cost of their own higher life or by injuring their neighbour; to bid them live for others, in short, instead of for themselves, was to make so heavy a demand on them that our Lord felt bound to shew them the reasonableness of such a demand, to place it on the widest and surest foundation. This foundation He finds in a law of nature. He appeals to their own observation and experience. For every man knows that a grain of wheat abides alone, contributes nothing to the general wealth or welfare, until it is cast into the earth, and is dissolved under the pressure of the physical and chemical forces of the sun-warmed earth; or, as we may perhaps add, until it is crushed into flour and worked up into bread. In either case dissolution, the death of the living grain, is the condition of its usefulness, its fruitfulness, *i.e.*, its higher life. For nothing exists for itself; nothing truly lives or fulfils its true function save as part of the great whole, and in so far as it ministers to the welfare and advance of the

whole. This is the law of universal being, of universal well-being. And though our Lord here gives only a single illustration of the law, his single illustration suffices to remind us that it *is* a general law, that it runs and holds throughout the physical universe. All things minister to and help each other—even sun, moon, and stars. All things give out life, or give up life and power, to quicken and cherish life in other forms; earth, water and heat ministering to the life of the plant, the plant dying that it may minister to the life of bird and beast, bird and beast dying that they may minister to the life of man.

The grain of wheat is but a single type, a single illustration of an universal law. Its death is the condition of its life, since death releases the vital power imprisoned in the husk, and sets it free to manifest itself in higher and more complex forms. For the grain of wheat when cast into the earth does not absolutely die. The principle of life held captive in it, so far from being extinguished by dissolution, is liberated; it develops new energy and unfolds itself in fairer and more fruitful forms. Death, such death as it undergoes, is not death to it, but the condition of freer, more energetic and useful life. Left to mould or rot in the granary, it absolutely perishes, subserving no useful purpose, but rather becoming a source of infection and decay, a savour of death unto death; while, cast into the fruitful earth, it becomes fruitful, ministers to the life of man, rises into and takes its part in the general harmony of service which pervades the universe.

Death, then, is the condition of life in the natural world. And the law of the natural world is also the law of the human world, as our Lord proceeds to shew in the Paradox which follows his parable; thus confirming that appeal to the analogy between the course and constitution of Nature and the truths of revealed Religion on which some of our ablest thinkers and divines have insisted, and warranting us in going to the world outside us for a key to the mysteries of the world within.

II. The Paradox (Verse 25), under slight variations, was often on the lips of our Lord: even in our brief records of his teaching we meet with it again and again. And wherever we meet it, in whatever connection of thought, it instantly arrests our attention in virtue of a certain difficulty that we find in it. We quite understand that it is a compressed saying, full of matter, full of truth even, if only we could get at it, and that it is purposely thrown into a paradoxical form in order that it may attach itself to our minds, cleave to them, and set us on thinking how much it covers and means; for paradoxes are the burrs of literature—they stick. But our difficulty lies in getting at its meaning, in absorbing its contents. Nevertheless, we all have glimpses of its meaning I suppose, and half our difficulty in being sure that we have seized its true meaning springs from our natural repugnance to the moral ideal it sets before us.

Take it as it stands here, for example, and carry on into it the illustration of the Parable which precedes it. Imagine a grain of wheat to be sentient, and to have

it at its option whether or not it will lie still in the granary, or be sown in the field. And, surely, there is no difficulty in seeing that, should it elect to remain in the warmth and comfort of the granary, it would both fall short of its proper function, its highest destiny and usefulness, and sooner or later mould and wither into absolute uselessness ; while, if it elected to be cast into the earth, it would, on the contrary, reach its being's end and aim, would live and multiply, and yield its contribution to the wealth and welfare of the world. Nor can there be any great difficulty in inferring, as a moral from this parable, that there are certain kinds of deaths which men must die if they would both live and contribute to the life and well-being of their fellows ; that they too are born for usefulness, for fruitfulness, and that they must willingly sacrifice whatever would impair their usefulness or render them unfruitful.

Take the Paradox in any connection, and is it difficult to see that just as the man who is always thinking how he may preserve his health is only too likely to lose it, and to sink into a confirmed invalid or hypochondriac, so the man who is always studying how he may save his life is only too likely to lose his life, or all the sweet uses of it ? To live is not by any means our first duty, but to do our duty even at the cost of life, if it can be done on no other terms.

This is the general scope and intention of the Paradox which was so often on the lips of Christ. And, taken in this general way, it is confirmed by our daily experience. For who are the men who, even in the judgment of the

world, have saved their lives—carried them to the highest goal, turned them to the best account? Not those who have lived for themselves, for their own comfort, their own enrichment, their own culture or happiness mainly; but those who have scorned wealth and ease, who have braved all perils, endured all hardships, made all sacrifices, in order to advance the borders of our common knowledge or to promote the common welfare; those, in short, who have been willing to fall to the earth and die if only they might thus bring forth much fruit.

But if we would enter into the full meaning of this Paradox, we must study it in the light of the New Testament psychology. For the word here rendered “life” is, in the Greek, as the margin of the Revised Version reminds us, *psyche* or “soul.” Now the Lord Jesus and his Apostles held and taught that, as there is a trinity in the Godhead, so also there is a tripartite nature in man. There is his *body*, his physical frame, with its organs and senses, and their several lusts or delights. There is the *soul*—the mind—which he shares with the animal creation, with its instincts and intelligence, in virtue of which he in some measure understands himself and the world around him, and knows how to make that world minister to his wants. And there is the *spirit*—the reason and conscience, the moral sense, which raises him above the beasts, which is his special distinction and crown, or which he shares only with the unseen orders of being revealed to his imagination and faith. By the soul he is attached to the visible world, with its pomps and shows, its wealth and honours. By the spirit he is

made free of the ethical and spiritual world, and comes to apprehend its laws and mysteries. Thus the soul stands, and mediates, between the body and the spirit; and according as it leans toward the one or the other, it determines the character of the man. If the soul lean toward the body, and find its chief good and supreme delight in gratifying the senses and all that holds by sense, he becomes a carnal man; the soul subdues the spirit, with its passion for truth, righteousness, love, to its own baser quality. While if the spirit rule the soul, the soul subdues the body, and the man becomes a spiritual man; for *his* chief good and supreme delight consist in serving and walking after the spirit; and he subordinates to the claims of truth, duty, love, not the mere gratification of the senses alone, but also that pursuit of wealth, knowledge, distinction in which, left to itself, the soul delights—in short, all that is merely temporal and visible.

Now we may either reject or accept this conception of the nature of man with perfect honesty—holding, if we reject it, that on the lips of Christ it was but an accommodation to the current conceptions of his race and time. But for myself I accept it, not simply because I have received it from the lips of Him who “knew what was in man,” and bow to his authority, but also because it seems to me the truest and completest account of what I find in myself and see in my fellows, the theory which covers all the facts of the case, and most adequately explains them. But even those who reject it cannot but admit that this *is* the theory assumed in the

New Testament, and that we can only get at the meaning of our Lord's paradox as we apply it to his words.

If, then, we apply this tripartite conception of the nature of man to the Paradox before us, what it comes to is this : that he who loves his *soul* supremely, and will not sacrifice its hankerings after wealth, ease, distinction, to the welfare of his *spirit*, loses, wastes, destroys even the soul itself ; while he who, at the call of the spirit, *i.e.*, at the prompting of truth, righteousness, and a pure unselfish love, "hates his soul," *i.e.*, treats its hankerings after comfort, wealth, honour, with a generous contempt, or daffs them aside with a generous indignation, saves even the life of the soul, and rises into the eternal life, the life that cannot die.

Lest even now the fundamental thought of this Paradox should be difficult to grasp, we may put it in one or two other forms. Death is the condition of all life ; but the true law is that the death should fall on the lower forms of life in order that the higher forms may thrive and multiply. The man in whom the *soul* rules reverses this order ; he inflicts death on the spirit to feed the hunger of the soul, sacrificing the higher to the lower. But the man in whom the *spirit* rules keeps the true order, sacrificing the lower to the higher : he starves and denies the wants and cravings of the soul whenever they would interfere with the claims of the spirit, lets them die, crucifies them, in order that the spirit may live.

Or, again : he who lives in the perishable elements of this world, and thinks that his true wealth consists in the abundance of them which he possesses, perishes

amid and with these perishable things. But he who lives in and for the spiritual and eternal world, and lays up for himself treasure in *that*, dies to the perishable indeed and the transitory, but lives in that which abides for ever. Dies to the perishable, did I say? Nay, but rather it is he alone who puts even the perishable elements of the world to their true use, and so saves his soul, as well as his spirit, unto life eternal.

Or, again : Selfishness is death in life ; self-renunciation, life in death.

We might throw the Paradox into many other forms, and possibly ought ; for I know no saying of Christ's which is so perplexing to many thoughtful and devout minds, none which I have found it more difficult to render plain and clear to my own mind ; but perhaps one more will suffice—one which, if it a little limits the immense scope of our Lord's words, may make their meaning more evident. The *soul*, as I have said, loves ease, wealth, distinction ; the *spirit* hungers for truth, duty, righteousness, love. If, then, a man so love his soul as to make comfort, opulent conditions, and the honour that comes from men, his chief or sole aim, while he neglects to cultivate the charity, the sense of duty, the quest of truth to which his spirit prompts him, does he not lose and destroy himself, even here and now ? Does he not sink into base and selfish moods which expose him to the scorn of those whose honour he covets ? does he not grow so ardent in his pursuit of wealth that he forgets to use and to enjoy it ? or, in his pursuit of comfort, does he not neglect plain duties—a

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neglect which promptly avenges itself upon him by sapping and destroying his comfort? But if he does, he loses his soul, as well as his spirit. He not only loses, *i.e.*, knowledge of the truth, the quick keen sense of duty, the pure joys of the pure unselfish love which does good looking for no return; he also loses the very comfort, the very wealth, the very honour, of which he went in quest. On the other hand, does not the man who seeks truth, who *will* do his duty even at the cost of ease and gain, who shews a simple and unstinted charity even to the evil and the unthankful, besides saving and cultivating his spirit, very commonly save his soul also, and win the very distinction and good-will, the ease and comfort, at which he did not directly aim, and at least wealth enough for all his wants, for all innocent and true enjoyments?

If the Lord Jesus had loved his life too much to part with it, would He have had the good conscience which feared no evil, or the respect and reverent affection of mankind—all that the soul longs for, as well as the pure and ineffable delight of spirit which He obtained by being faithful unto death?

We call this saying a paradox, and find it hard to understand. And yet do we not understand it well enough when we see it incarnated in a life or embodied in a tale? For who, after all, are the men whom we ourselves most reverence and admire? Are they the *soulish* men who care only for themselves, care only to be rich, only to be at ease, only to rise to conspicuous place and to force their name on the lips of their

fellows? Or are they the *spiritual* men who willingly sacrifice themselves, and their own interests and cravings, in order that they may be useful and fruitful members of society, the leaders and martyrs of some good cause? What do we mean by *heroism* but just this power of subordinating self to the common welfare—this losing the soul in order to save it?

If we want a commentary on this Paradox which will make it clear to the simplest understanding, we may find it, not in the heroes of the historic page alone, but in almost every newspaper we read. Here, for instance, is what I have read in my newspaper on the very day on which these sentences were written. “Joseph Sieg, an engine-driver on the Pennsylvanian Railway, saved the lives of six hundred passengers by an extraordinary act of heroism.” Extraordinary? Yes: and yet similar acts occur every day. “The furnace door was opened by the fireman, to replenish the fire, while the train was going thirty-five miles an hour. The back draught forced the flames out, so that the car of the locomotive caught fire, and the engine-driver and the fireman were driven back over the tender into a passenger car, leaving the engine without control. The speed increased, and the volume of flame with it. There was imminent danger that all the carriages would take fire, and the whole train be consumed. The engine-driver, seeing that the only way to save the passengers was to return to the engine and stop the train, plunged into the flames, climbed back into the red-hot tender, and reversed the engine. When the train came to a standstill he was

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found in the water-tank, into which he had dropped, with his clothes entirely burned off, his face disfigured, his hands shockingly burned, and his whole body blistered so badly that he is not expected to survive." In the light of such a noble deed, such self-sacrifice, as that, is there any difficulty in entering into the meaning of the paradox, "He that loveth his life loseth it, and he that hateth his life saveth it"? If love of life, or fear of death, had held back Joseph Sieg from doing his duty, he might have been alive to-day, and yet dead to all that makes man man. Hating his life at the call of duty, and dying in the performance of his duty, has he not saved it—doing more for man and God in that brief moment than many do in threescore years and ten?

No, it is not the Paradox in itself which is so hard to understand, but our wills which are so hard to bend, our souls which are so reluctant to be controlled and brought into their due subjection to the spirit. Our creed may be sound enough; but how many of us would have done what that brave engine-driver did, had we stood in his place? As many of us as feel that we could not have risen to his heroic level have the proof in ourselves that, despite our creed, we have not gone so far as he had gone to master what Christ Himself affirms to be a fundamental law of his kingdom; that we are not as yet so willing to lose our life at the call of duty as he was. And it therefore behoves us to ask ourselves whether we are, in any true sense of the words, hating and crucifying our soul that we may live and walk in the spirit: whether our love of truth is a passion, and our love of right-

eousness and charity a passion, to which we cheerfully sacrifice ease, wealth, or the pursuit of wealth, the admiration, and even the goodwill of our neighbours? That is a searching question for any man to ask of himself or of others—for which of us can answer it as he would wish to answer and knows he ought to answer it? but it is none the less a question which we are bound to ask at least of ourselves. For Christ, who did not love his life, but freely gave it up for us all, Himself assures us, with a solemn “Verily, verily,” that if we do not thus hate our souls and all that our souls hanker after, we have not yet possessed ourselves of the life eternal.

Nor is it safe to plead, as many do, that they are at least earnestly trying to save their souls by faith in Christ and by a diligent attention to religious duties. For it is Christ Himself who says, “He that saveth his soul shall lose it.” It is not our *souls* that have to be saved, but our *spirits*, that in us which seeks truth, hungers after righteousness, and breathes love to all mankind. And, in the Church, there is perhaps no commoner mistake than this attempt to save the soul rather than the spirit. For in what Church do we not find men to whom “heaven” means a place in which they who are poor here shall be rich for ever, they who are here oppressed with toil shall enter into an everlasting comfort and rest, they who are unknown here shall there be known and honoured? That is to say, there are only too many in every Church who project the lusts of the soul into the world to come, and hope to enjoy there-

the very gratifications which they have missed here ! But such a saving of the soul would be a losing of it. What Christ bids us do is to treat this hungry soul of ours with a generous scorn and contempt, to love and pursue truth, not wealth ; duty, not comfort ; and the charity which shares all it has with others, not the honour which lifts us above others and separates us from them. And it is only as we do thus subordinate the soul, with its eager cravings, to the spirit's demand for truth, righteousness, love, that we become of one mind and purpose with Christ and can share in his salvation.

## XX.

### *THE GOSPEL TO THE GREEKS.*

#### III.—THE PROMISE.

“If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there shall my servant be also : if any man serve me, him will the Father honour.”—JOHN xii. 26.

IN the week in which He died, the Lord Jesus stood and taught in the Court of the Women—his favourite resort in the Temple—the first of the three Courts which were sacred to Jews alone. Immediately below it, but separated from it by a stone fence, which it was death for any alien to pass, lay the Court of the Gentiles. To this lower court He was summoned by Andrew and Philip, that He might speak with certain Greeks who had decided to see Him—to see and to devote themselves to his service. He is greatly moved by their devotion, for He beholds in them the heralds and ambassadors of the whole Gentile world, and perceives that He is now to be glorified in that He is to be hailed as “the general Saviour of mankind.” In a few telling and pregnant sentences He sums up, for their instruction, the main truths of the Gospel He had preached at large to the Jews, retaining even the very forms of thought most

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familiar to Him, and speaking in parable and paradox, promise and prediction.

The dominant thought of this Gospel to the Greeks is that which lies at the root of his own life and of all his teaching ; *viz.*, that self-sacrifice is the true law of life. And it is easy to see why He laid special emphasis on this fact in speaking to Greeks ; for, self-culture, self-gratification, was the Greek ideal : and in asking them to substitute self-renunciation for self-culture, self-sacrifice for self-gratification, the Lord Jesus was calling on them to reverse the natural current of their being, and to set before them an ideal the very opposite to that which they had hitherto pursued.

This was so heavy a demand to make on them that our Lord felt bound to vindicate it. And He vindicates it by appealing to their own observation and experience. They could see for themselves that a grain of wheat abides alone, contributing nothing to the wealth and welfare of the world until it is cast into the earth and dies, but dies only to enter on a larger and more fruitful life. And the grain of wheat is but a single illustration of an universal law.

In this Parable, therefore, the Lord Jesus lays a foundation for the law of self-sacrifice as broad and deep as the universe ; and, having laid it, He proceeds to shew that this law holds throughout the human as well as the physical world in his famous Paradox : “ He that loveth his life loseth it, and he that hateth his life saveth it.” That is to say, Just as the man who is always thinking how he may preserve his health is only too likely to lose

it, so the man who is always studying how he may save his life is only too likely to lose it, or all that makes it worth having. To live is not our first duty, but to do our duty even though it be at the risk or cost of life.

And so we reach the Promise : “ *If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am there shall my servant be also : if any man serve me, him will the Father honour.* ” Here, then, our Lord, having laid his foundation broad and deep in nature and in human nature, applies his law of self-renunciation to the Church, to the obedience of his Disciples. They can only serve Him by following Him ; and they can only follow Him by sharing in the spirit of his self-sacrifice. He was about to take up his cross, to be lifted up from the earth upon it, a sacrifice for the sin of the world ; the Highest giving Himself for the lowest, the Best for the worst. In Him, therefore, both his parable and his paradox find their supreme illustration. For did not *He* fall into the earth and die only to bring forth “ much fruit,” a harvest with which the world is still white ? Did not He, in very deed, save his life by losing it ? and would He not have lost it if He had saved it ?

Assume that these Greeks came to ask Him to leave the hostile and ungrateful Jews, and become the honoured Sage and Councillor of a foreign Court. Had He listened to their request, He might have escaped the Cross, and have resided in a palace, or a college, surrounded for years with honour, love, and troops of friends ; but what would have become of the work which his Father gave Him to do ? how should the world have been redeemed

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and reconciled unto God? nay, how should He Himself have been other than dead to name and fame and use? The Name which is above every name would have been unknown, and He who is the Life indeed would long since have mouldered in an obscure grave, as dead as many another Eastern sage who, while he lived, was the pride of an Academy or a Court. Even if his *words* had kept his memory green, must we not have mourned over Him Himself as a "lost leader," a traitor to his own teaching, an apostate from the high cause He had espoused, instead of saying, as we can now say with sacred joy and reverence and pride, "Albeit his life was the fairest and greatest, and his teaching the purest and noblest, that the world has ever seen, yet nothing in his life became Him like the leaving it?"

On the other hand, by being true to his Father and his work, He lost his life only to save it—lost it not without effort and pain, as we are reminded by his exclamation in Verse 27, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" an exclamation to which we cannot listen without becoming aware of the natural and strong recoil of his soul from death, and of the strife between soul and spirit, between the lower and higher natures which were in Him. But this strife ended in the victory of the higher over the lower when the inward debate closed in the resolve to pray, not, "Father, save me from this hour," but, "Father, glorify thy name." By thus losing his life in this world, He not only saved it unto life eternal; He also became the Author of eternal life to as many as believe on his Name.

This law of self-sacrifice, then, was the law of his own life, and must become the law of life to these Greeks if they would follow Him. That which is highest and best in *them* can only live and quicken life in others, it can only become vigorous, perfect, eternal, as that which is lower in them is subdued and mortified. Did they understand how much was involved in serving Him? Were they prepared to find their ideal in self-renunciation instead of self-culture, in self-sacrifice rather than in self-gratification? If they were and did, He would welcome them to his service as cordially as if they were sons of faithful Abraham: for, said He, “If *any* man,” Gentile or Jew, “will serve me, let him follow me, and where I am there shall he also come”; and again, “‘If *any* man,’ Jew or Gentile, ‘will serve me, him will my Father honour.’ But let him understand that, if he would serve Me, he must deny himself, must be prepared to lose his life; let him understand that he must die to himself, and to all merely selfish aims, if he would walk in the path which I tread. If he will do this, his loss shall turn to gain. Not only will he save himself, by losing or dying to self, but him will my Father honour—as certainly honour *him* as He will glorify Me. In him life shall pass and rise into life everlasting, and whither I go thither shall he come.” So that this promise is a double promise; it resolves itself into a promise for this world, and a promise for the world to come.

The promise for this world is, “If any man will serve me, him will the Father honour”—a promise which sounds too good to be true. As we ponder it in our

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hearts we are tempted to say, “What, *God* honour a *man*: how can that be?” It seems incredible that we should be able to do anything to win the respect, the esteem, the affectionate admiration of the Maker and Ruler of the universe. We *honour* those who are above us: how, then, can the Almighty honour those who are so far beneath Him?

And yet so long ago as the time of Eli and Samuel Jehovah is represented as saying, “Them that honour me I will honour,” while “they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” Here, too, the very structure of the sentence shews that the word “honour” is used in its usual sense, and that our Lord means to affirm that God sincerely reverences and esteems any man who lives for others rather than for himself. As why should He not? It is not true that we honour *only* that which is above us. We honour even a dog if he serve us with sagacity and fidelity, if, *i.e.*, he acts on the prompting of that which is highest and best in his nature, and denies the greedy and selfish impulses of his lower nature. A common Latin proverb bids us “reverence” the innocence of the young; and even the worst of men have been stricken with awe at the spectacle of an unstained and virginal purity. And who does not honour the weak of this world when they overcome the strong, when they shew themselves brave and cheerful and kind, lovers of truth and lovers of righteousness, amid manifold temptations, from without and from within, to be disloyal, selfish, cowardly, indolent, and yielding? In short, we honour any one, however low in the scale of being he may stand,

who is true to his better impulses, and who, that he may be true to them, imposes a yoke or a cross on his baser passions and lusts.

Why, then, should not the Most High honour us? why should He not reverence and love us if we, his servants and children, serve Him truly; if we are honest, loyal, brave, diligent, cheerful, kind, amid a thousand temptations to be false and cowardly, lazy and surly, indolent, selfish, unkind? The greater a man is the more generously he appreciates, the more unaffectedly and unreservedly he reverences and admires, the moral victories achieved by those who are less richly endowed than himself, the virtues which they cherish, the self-mastery and self-sacrifice they display. And if men are made in the image of God, must we not infer that in proportion to his greatness will be *his* generosity, his reverence and admiration for any man who serves and follows Christ, for any man, *i.e.*, who, though drawn on every hand to seek his own things, really lives for others rather than for himself, really values truth above wealth, righteousness before comfort, charity more than self-indulgence?

Must not He who is our Father, in whom therefore love quickens insight, see far more in any service we can render, any self-denying deed by which we help on his great work—the illumination and redemption of the world—than we can see in it, and put a far higher value on it than that at which even the kindest of our neighbours appraises it? How much did *Christ* see in the coming of these Greeks to Him which they themselves

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could not see, which even Andrew and Philip could not see ! What joy it gave Him that "the Gentiles also" should be seeking life ! What a holy strife and trouble it kindled in his soul, and what a divine victory and calm came out of that trouble and strife ! And who was it that saw Peter, the stedfast *Rock*, in the wavering and inconstant Simon ? who that saw in the poor widow's two mites "more" than all the shekels of the Scribes ? who that turned Mary's "alabaster" of spike-nard into a standing "memorial" of her throughout all the world ? But Christ is the very brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. We need not and cannot doubt, therefore, that if we walk after the spirit and not after the flesh, if we follow the promptings of our higher and not our lower nature, if we deny ourselves and take up the cross that we may follow Christ and be like Him, even God Himself will "honour" us, that He will reverence, admire, and love whatever in us is pure, whatever good, whatever honourable, whatever unselfish and fruitful. Even this fine motive and inspiration to a life higher than that which is natural and easy to us is not withheld from us. And if *this* will not nerve and animate us to live above the world, and the world's law, what will ?

But there is a second promise in this Promise, a promise for the world to come. The man whom God honours cannot die, cannot lack any felicity which his Father can confer upon him. Life, in him, will rise and flower into life everlasting. There is an exquisite simplicity in the form which this promise of future good

assumes on the lips of our Lord : “If any man follow me, where I am, there also shall my servant come.” Why, of course he will ! If one man follows another, he *must* come successively to every spot which his leader has occupied, and will only rest where *he* rests. There is a kind of parable in the words ; and in the parable the strongest of all arguments. Difficult as we find it to persuade ourselves that we shall ever share the everlasting bliss and glory which we confess that Christ fully deserves, though we can never deserve it, we can hardly resist the force of the argument when He Himself throws it into this simple and inimitable, this gracious and most encouraging, form. If we follow Him, we must at last come to the place in which He awaits us.

All depends, therefore, on *following* Him, on our fidelity in following Him. God will honour us here, and take us to dwell with Him hereafter, if we make the law of his life the law of our life, and tread in the path He trod. And we follow Him and keep his law whenever, like the dog, the servant, the child of whom I have spoken, we are faithful and diligent, brave, cheerful, unselfish, kind ; whenever we subdue and deny the baser elements and passions of our nature in order that we may live in that in us which is highest and best ; whenever we are true though we lose by it, honest in scorn of consequence, kind even to the evil and unthankful, and do good to the unjust as well as the just. We serve and follow Christ, and win the honour which comes from God, when we walk by faith in spiritual and eternal realities, not by our perception of what will pro-

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mote our immediate gain or comfort; when we rule ourselves that we may be faithful to the true ends of life, and deny ourselves that we may minister to the wants of others.

In this simple summary of the contents of this Promise, as interpreted by its preceding context, there surely is nothing technical or mystical, nothing which any plain man cannot grasp. Nor is there anything arbitrary, capricious, or excessive in the demand that, to serve and follow Christ, to live in those higher chambers of our nature which open heavenward, shall be our end and aim. It is our reasonable service. It is the plain dictate of our own good sense when once that good sense has been illuminated by the truths and hopes of religion. And yet to be true to it is, as we find the moment we make the attempt, to take up a cross. For is it not hard to deny the lower nature, with its hungry cravings for comfort and pleasure, for opulence and the good word of man? Is it not hard to follow after truth when untruth would save us from loss or shame, to pursue righteousness when unrighteousness looks easy and profitable, to shew charity when selfishness is so natural to us and so pleasant? Is it not hard to refrain from snatching at the indulgences which injure but allure us, at the gains which promise to enrich although they really impoverish us, and to press on to the best and noblest ends amid an endless array of temptations and doubts and fears?

The course to which Christ invites us, then, is one to which our own good sense prompts us, and yet to flesh

and blood it is most hard, full of loss and pain. It is a course on which we can only enter by a kind of death, and in which we can only continue by suffering death in many forms ; and yet it is the one only course by which we can rise into a true life, a life which will prove itself to be true by flowering out into life everlasting. That it is our true life, and that it will blossom into life eternal, should be a sufficient “ spur in the sides of our intent.” But lest it should not prove sufficient, we are still further incited and encouraged by the assurance that, if we serve the cause and follow the example of Christ, God will “ honour” us even here and now, and by honouring us bring a new strength and sweetness into our lives ; while, hereafter, we shall infallibly reach that great home and city of the soul to which our path conducts, and arrive where He is in whose steps we have trodden, and there be changed into his image, satisfied with his likeness and invested with his glory.

## XXI.

### *THE GOSPEL TO THE GREEKS.*

#### IV.—THE PREDICTION.

“And I, if I be lifted from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”—JOHN xii. 32.

IN the Sermon, or Gospel, to the Greeks recorded in this Chapter, our Lord delivers to them, both in substance and in form, the very gospel which He had delivered at large to the Jews. In the Parable of Verse 24, He shews them that even a grain of wheat cannot be glorified except it die, cannot, *i.e.*, enter into the most perfect and fruitful form of its life except by losing its life. In the familiar Paradox of Verse 25, He shews them that *man* can be glorified only on the same terms, that he too must lose his life if he would save it unto life eternal; if, *i.e.*, he also would rise into the most perfect and fruitful form of life open to him. In the Promise of Verse 26, He shews them that the same law holds in the Church, that all who would serve Him must follow Him in the path of self-sacrifice of which his cross was the symbol, and thus rise into a life so perfect and fruitful that God would “honour” them for it

even here and now, while hereafter He would take them to be with Jesus where He is.

On this parable, this paradox, this promise we have dwelt before ; and we have now only to consider the Prediction of Verse 32: "*I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.*"

These sacred words are so familiar to us that in all probability they no longer leave a sharp and vivid impression on our minds, although, however often we read or listen to them, we can hardly fail to be conscious of a certain greatness in them and a certain grace. Taken in their general connection, they are evidently a supreme illustration of that law of *life by death* which our Lord had been enforcing ; they remind us that He Himself was about to obey, as He always had obeyed, the law which He had just affirmed to be an inevitable condition of discipleship—to save his life by losing it, to die that He might bring forth much fruit, to pass, by the way of the Cross, to the eternal home of the spirit, to humble Himself that He might be exalted. And, taken thus even, the words are full of power, full of pathetic appeal ; for who ever flung away his life so generously as He, or saved it so nobly, inasmuch as He saved not Himself alone, but the whole world ? Or from whose death has there ever sprung a harvest so fruitful, so vast, and so enduring ?

I. But it is when we come to consider the words in themselves, and in their more immediate context, that we catch some glimpse of the full orb of their meaning ; for then we see that they contain, not a single prophecy,

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but a fourfold prediction. They predict (1) the death of the cross ; but they also predict (2) the ascension into heaven. They predict (3) the extension of the kingdom of God from the Jewish to the Gentile world ; but they also predict (4) the final triumph of good over evil throughout the universe. If, therefore, the Gentiles received but one prophecy directly from the lips of Christ, we may at least say of it that it is *one* which includes *all*, one which sums up the whole series of visions vouchsafed whether to Hebrew or to Christian seers.

(1) These words predict, first of all, *the death of the Cross*, though, instead of parading, they veil and extenuate its horrors ; speaking of it as a “mere lifting up from the earth,” and so making the Cross itself an instrument of elevation rather than an implement of torture and shame. Now we do not always recognize the prophetic power displayed by our Lord Jesus in foretelling “by what manner of death he should die.” He had long known that the Jews would put Him to death. It needed no prophet to forecast *that* perhaps, when once their bitter enmity had been aroused ; for which of the servants of God had they not rejected and slain ? But *crucifixion* was not commonly inflicted, even by the Romans, except on traitors or slaves ; while, among the Jews, an apostate, an offender against the sanctity of the Temple or the authority of the Law, was stoned. There was, therefore, an indubitable element of prediction in our Lord’s habitual foreboding that He should be “crucified,” that He should be lifted up to bear our sins, in his own body, on the tree.

(2) Nor was it only his crucifixion which He foretold. Behind and beyond that shameful elevation, He saw a glorious ascension into heaven. Literally rendered, his words run, not "if I be lifted up *from* the earth," but "if I be lifted up *out of, or above*, the earth"; and in this peculiar phrase, whatever its first intention may have been, all the great critics find a reference to his resurrection from the dead and his assumption to the right hand of God, as well as to the peculiar manner of the death by which He was to glorify God. There is here, therefore, a splendid example of his faith in the love and justice of his Father, and of his prophetic insight into his Father's will. Must not He have been in very deed a Seer who could foretell an event so improbable, so incredible to human wisdom, as that One who was soon to perish on the cross of a slave should rise from the grave in which they laid Him, and ascend the throne of the universe? Must not He have been a veritable prophet who could foresee that death, so far from putting a period to his life, would but enhance the power of his life, and that the obloquy of the Cross, instead of making Him of no reputation, would only minister to and swell his glory?

He who predicted his own death, then, and even the manner of his death, also predicted his triumph over death, and his ascension into heaven; and if the former prediction indicated but a comparatively low measure of the prophetic energy, it must be admitted that in the latter we have a splendid and illustrious proof of his prophetic energy and foresight. Yet even this latter

prediction pales before the glory of those that follow it. For our Lord proceeds to foretell the results of his death, and of his triumph over death, the effects of his being lifted up *from* the earth, and of his being lifted up *out of* and beyond the earth.

(3) One result will be, He says, that He will draw *all* men, without distinction of race—both the Jews who had rejected Him and the Gentiles who were ignorant of Him—unto Himself. And what could have seemed more improbable, more incredible, than that? Who but He could have seen in the crucifixion of a Galilean peasant, against whom the whole world, Hebrew and heathen, had conspired, the signal of a religious revolution which should cover the whole world, and lift and bind its scattered and hostile races into one new and perfect manhood?

When these Greeks came to Him, when He learned that they had “decided” to cast in their lot with Him, He saw in them the ambassadors of all the Gentile races, and exclaimed, “Now is the Son of man glorified!” for it was his “glory” to be the Saviour not of one nation only, but of all nations. We have grown so familiar with this “glory” of his that we do not easily realize either how much that incident must have meant for Him, or how much the inclusion of Greeks in his kingdom involved. The whole set of his time was against any such inclusion. The whole course of history had been against it for two thousand years. Through all those centuries God had had an elect people to whom, to whom exclusively, He had confined the direct

and immediate disclosures of his will. Was this Divine habit to be changed all in a moment? Could it be that the unique grace so long shewn to the Jews was now to be extended to all mankind? True, God had elected Israel only that Israel might be his minister to mankind, only that in the seed of Abraham He might store up a blessing for all the families of the earth. True, too, that our Lord Himself had never called Himself "Son of Abraham," or "Son of David," though He had not flatly rejected these names when they were conferred upon Him, but had only suggested the qualifications without which they would be inadmissible (John viii. 58; Matt. xxii. 43-45). As if with some prevision of the universality of his mission, He had habitually called Himself "the Son of man," *i.e.*, the Son of Humanity at large, from the first. But, in the pride of its election, Israel had long forgotten the end for which it was elected. And, as we have seen, there had been a time even in the public ministry of the Son of Man when He Himself had thought that He was not sent "save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and had learned with joy and wonder, from the generous and immutable faith of a poor Syro-Phœnician woman in the all-embracing love of God, that even the Gentile dogs under the table of Israel might at least eat of the crumbs which fell from a table so bountifully spread.

Now a conviction so ancient, so deeply rooted and widely spread, as this belief in the incommunicable immunities and privileges of the elect people, was not to be lightly shaken, however high the authority and however

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noble the spirit in which it was assailed. If we would measure its strength and inveteracy we must mark how long it resisted even the authority of Christ Himself, and held out against the power and the pleadings of the very Spirit of God. When Peter was convinced that no man was common or unclean, and therefore that no man, or caste, or race, could any longer claim special and exclusive privilege in the kingdom of God, or any Divine election save an election to serve their fellows, he found it no easy task to convert the Church, or even his brother apostles, to his own new faith in the universal love of God. Some of the Apostles—James, for instance—were never more than half converted to it. A large section of the primitive Church—the Hebraists, as they were called—were never converted to it at all, but made the life of the Apostle to the Gentiles bitter to him by their uncompromising hostility to the new generous Gospel he preached. Nay, it may be doubted whether half, and the larger half, of the Christian Church has been converted to it to this day: for how can *they* be said to believe in the Love which holds no man common and therefore no man sacred, no man unclean and therefore no man clean, who pride themselves either on an election unto life from which the bulk of their fellows are excluded, or on possessing, even if they do not themselves pertain to it, a sacred priestly caste which alone can mediate between earth and Heaven and bring men near to God?

All the more wonderful was it that, in the face of this ancient and potent tradition—this claim to be in some

way dearer to God than “the rest,” which seems to live in our very blood—the Lord Jesus should predict, even before He died, “I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all men* unto myself,” without distinction of race or caste or function. If, for our sins, the prophecy is only fulfilled in part even yet, we can only the more admire the penetrating prophetic glance which could look through long centuries to a time still to come, when all the world shall recognize its equal and common humanity, and rejoice in the Love which embraces and redeems us all.

(4) Even yet, however, we have not exhausted this marvellous prediction, have not followed it out to its full scope. For just as behind the death of the Cross Jesus saw the resurrection and ascension into heaven, so behind and beyond the extension of his kingdom from the Jews to the whole Gentile world, He foresaw, and foretold, the final triumph of good over evil.

When He had heard the great voice out of heaven which assured Him that, as God had glorified Him in his work among the Jews, so also He would glorify Him again in his still greater work among the Gentiles, He cried, “Now is a judgment” (*i.e.*, “There is now a judicial crisis”) “of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out;” while in the next breath He adds, “And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to myself.” Evidently, therefore, He implies a contrast between Himself and the Prince of this world, and their several destinies.

Who, then, is this Prince? “Prince of this world”

was a recognized Jewish title for Satan whom, in their pride of place and election, they regarded as the god and ruler of the Gentile world, in contradistinction to Jehovah, whom they regarded as *their* King alone. And there was sufficient truth in this conception to warrant our Lord in adopting it, though we may be sure that He held God to be the Lord and King of all men, and not of the Jews only. For if "devil" be but "evil" written large, if Satan be the personification of, or the name we give to, the Principle of Evil, then a world so grossly wicked as was the civilized world of antiquity, may be very truly said to have been under his dominion.

It is this evil Prince, or Principle, of whose downfall from the seat of power Jesus finds a signal in the extension of his kingdom to the Gentiles. It is this Prince whom He Himself is destined to replace. Jesus Himself will henceforth be the Lord and Ruler of the Gentiles, in the same sense in which the Jews had held Jehovah to be their Lord and Ruler. But though He is to displace the Prince of this world, He will not be, as the Jews expected Him to be, only another and a better Prince of the world. He is to be lifted out of, and above, the world. To Him the elevation to the cross—the throne of love, is but an emblem of his elevation to heaven—the throne of power. From thence He will *draw* men, draw them by the sweet and healthy influences, by the gentle compulsions, of the love He has shewn for them and revealed to them, until at last they shall "all" come to Him, and be changed into his image, clothed with his righteousness, crowned with his

glory. And this word, “*all* men,” is not to be limited in any way by our poor conceptions of what his love and power can do. It does not mean simply—as even Dr. Westcott, one of our most learned and orthodox commentators, confesses—that He will draw Gentiles as well as Jews; but that He will draw *all* Jews and *all* Gentiles unto Himself. It means nothing less than St. Paul means when, having just charged the Jews with their long rebellion against God, and the Gentiles with their long and hardy violation of his laws, he nevertheless concludes that “*the fulness of the Gentiles*” shall be brought into the kingdom of heaven, and that “*all Israel* shall be saved;” what he means when he also affirms that God has convicted all men of disobedience only “that he may have mercy on all.”

So that the scope of this great prediction is very wide. It is charged with the music of an eternal hope. It presses on through century after century, age after age, unfulfilled, or only fulfilled in part, and never tires nor rests until it closes in the full diapason of a redeemed humanity, a regenerated universe. It conducts us from the travail of the Cross to that supreme moment when, seated on the throne of an universal dominion, Christ shall “see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.”

II. Thus far, then, it has been our endeavour to bring out the immense scope of this prediction, to shew how far it reaches, how much it contains and involves. And though it would be easy to say much more on a theme so vast, perhaps enough has been said to give some inkling of the weight and variety of its contents. But

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in this prediction an argument is implied which has still to be indicated, however slightly and imperfectly.

We cannot read the verse attentively without asking, What was there in the lifting up of Christ to produce results so vast and so far-reaching as those which He foresees from it and foretells? In reply to that question, let me point out, (1) that there is a kind of parable in the words themselves, very simple, indeed, but very suggestive. Christ was *lifted up*, that He might be the better seen; He was raised above the crowd of men, that the crowd might gaze upon Him. He was lifted up *on the cross*, that men might see how much He was willing to do and to bear for them. He was lifted up *into heaven*, that He might be able to bear and to do still more for them. Lifted up above all men by the tragic splendour of his death, lifted still higher by the victorious splendour of his resurrection from the dead, He commands at least the attention, if not the homage, of the whole world.

(2) Let me also point out that, before He could hope to draw *all* men to Himself, He must lose the local, the Jewish, form He wore, and assume the form of the perfect, the universal, man; Jesus of Nazareth must be shewn to be the Christ of God. So long as He remained a Jew, a son of Abraham, a son of David, after the flesh, He might *be*, but He could hardly be recognized as, in very deed the Son of *Man*. So long as He wore flesh about Him, He could only be seen, heard, felt, by as many as gathered round Him, beheld his works, listened to his words. Before He could become a

quickening Spirit to the whole human race, He must be released from all these local and national limitations, and assume a form of being which would bring Him at least as near to every man as He was to the citizens of Jerusalem or the peasants of Galilee ; a form of being which would make Him as present (and a thousandfold more vital and potent) to the men of every age, as He had been to the men of his own generation. And it was only by dying in the flesh, and rising in the spirit, and carrying his glorified humanity to the throne of heaven, that He could break away from all these local bonds, all these temporal limitations, and shew Himself to be the Lord and Saviour of all.

(3) Let me also remind you that the rejection of Jesus by the main body of the Jews, of "his own" to whom He came, seems to have been a necessary condition of the deposition of the elect Israel from its pride of place and privilege ; while his acceptance by his Jewish disciples and by representatives of the great Gentile world seems to have been a necessary condition of the fulfilment of the great promise to Abraham and his seed, that, in them, all the families of the earth should be blessed, the natural and ordained means of carrying forth that blessing into and throughout the world at large.

(4) But, of course, the great argument in this passage is, that in the Cross we have the revelation of a Love too large and divine to be confined to one race, or even to one world. If in the lifting up of Christ from the earth on the tree we have, as we believe and know that

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we have, the crowning disclosure and proof of the redeeming love of God for man, of a Love which could be alienated by no sin and would not alter even "where it alteration found," a Love that would stop at no sacrifice by which men could be reconciled to the Father against whom they had sinned, and brought back to their life in Him, then, surely the Lord Jesus might well hope that, by revealing such a love as this—a love so generous, so free, so pathetic, so divine—He should draw all men to Himself; and by drawing them to Himself draw them back to his Father and our Father, to his God and ours.

And (5) when He was lifted up not only *from*, but *out of* the earth, when He, who died by and for our sins, was raised from the dead, raised into heaven, was He not declared to be the Son of God *with power*? Did not the God who raised Him up set his seal of approval to his atoning and reconciling work? Did He not authenticate the revelation of forgiving and renewing love which Christ had made, and avow that love to be his own? But if in very deed God so loved us as to give his Son to die for us, that by the power of his death we might be quickened into our true and eternal life, and if that love did not cease at the Cross, but still sheds down its quickening and renewing influences from heaven, ought not that love to reach its end? *Can a love, "so amazing, so divine," fail to reach its end?* Must not every man, sooner or later, see and feel that love? And can any man who really sees and feels it, any man who really believes that God *so loved him*, fail to be "drawn" by it, and to respond to it?

Surely the argument is sound enough, however imperfectly it may be stated. The love of God for man, a love which could go so far and do so much for us all, cannot ultimately be hidden from any man: and when once it is shewn to him, and comes home to him, will any man be able to resist it? Have *you* resisted it? That can only be because you have not really known and believed "the love which God hath toward" you. Is even the best of us only faintly moved by it? do we only respond to it imperfectly and in part? That is because we only know it in part, because our conception of it is so poor and imperfect. Once known and believed, it cannot fail to find, and to draw, us. And it will at last be made known to all—made known through mercy and judgment, brought home to us amid agonies of shame and remorse perhaps, and perhaps by gentle and gradual unfoldings of its power; but made known in some form it must be, or how shall the hope which sustained Christ in the hour and article of death be fulfilled?—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself."

## XXII.

### *THE GOSPEL TO THE GREEKS.*

#### V.—THE PRAYER.

“Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.”—JOHN xii. 27, 28.

IF, as many suppose, the Greeks who desired to see Jesus, came to beg that He would abandon the ungrateful Jews—of whose fatal hostility they were aware—and travel with them to some foreign court in which they could assure Him of an honourable welcome, it is easy to understand that, as He listened to their request, He would feel more deeply than ever the gravity of the approaching crisis, and set Himself to consider both how He was to meet it, and how He could prepare his disciples to meet it. That He could only meet it by submitting to the worst which the malice of the Jews could do against Him, that He could only redeem men by freely laying down his life for them all, I suppose He never doubted for a moment. That He did not doubt it at *this* moment is plain, I think, from his reply to the petition of the Greeks—from his parable of the grain of

wheat, which *must* die in order that it may live ; and from the paradox which followed it on losing life in order to save it. Nor is it less plain that He was bent on bracing and fortifying the minds of his disciples for what was about to happen : or why should He have taken such pains to bring out the bright and hopeful aspects of the death by which He was to glorify God ? Why did He remind them of the corn which only falls into the earth and dies in order that it may live and bring forth much fruit ? Why remind them of the saying He had often used before, that to love life more than duty was to lose it, while to lose life in the discharge of duty was to save it unto life eternal ? Why did He promise them that, if they followed Him, if they also were faithful unto death, they should not only live eternally, but rejoin Him in the world to which He went, and be honoured by his Father even as He Himself was honoured ?

But just as we ourselves, when we see that the path of duty grows very steep and will be full of toil and pain, may shrink from setting out upon it for a moment, and even pause for more than a moment to consider whether our end may not be reached by some less perilous path, and yet commit no sin, so also it seems to have been with Him who was more than man. He had come to teach and save both Jew and Greek. He had thought that there was no way to save them except the way of the Cross. But these Greeks suggest another way. They invite Him to leave the Jews who would not listen to Him, and come to Gentiles who would

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honour and reverence Him. Was it a possible course ? Was it possible that He might thus save *them*, and the world through them ? For a moment his soul is troubled, agitated, confused—not, we may well believe, by any desire to spare Himself, to evade any personal sacrifice, but by the wish to spare the Jews the great crime on which they were bent, and to save the world, not against its will, but with its free consent. For an instant, then, He pauses to consider this plausible suggestion, feeling from the first, I suppose, that it was only plausible, and nothing more ; for deep down in his heart there lay the conviction, a conviction to which He had just given manifold expression, that He had come into the world to die, and by his death to give life to the world. Yet He is not ashamed to let his disciples see the momentary agitation and perplexity of his spirit, how it is torn and confused by conflicting thoughts, although He must have known how much, in this posture and frame of the soul, He would seem to them unlike Himself. “Now is my soul troubled,” He cries, “and what shall I say ?” as if asking their sympathy in the agony of his spirit, almost as if asking their help. But they have no help to give ; nor does He really need their help. He *cannot* pray, “Father, save me from this hour ;” He cannot accept any suggestion, however plausible, to save Himself ; for if He save Himself, how shall He save others ? He can only pray, “Father, glorify thy name,” and take the way of the Cross.

On this singular prayer, this cry from a heart at conflict with itself, let us meditate awhile ; for here, I think,

we shall find that our Lord Himself is teaching us how to pray, that his very prayer is for our sakes rather than for his own, as well as the Voice out of Heaven which replied to it.

The first point we have to determine is, Does this prayer consist of two petitions, or only of one? And this point, important as it is—for the whole sense of the passage turns upon it—is not so easy to determine as it may appear to be; since it is mainly a question of punctuation, and we are left to punctuate the New Testament for ourselves. The most ancient Greek manuscripts, as some of you know, contain merely a series of capital letters, without stops, without even any division of word from word. We have first to divide word from word, and sentence from sentence; and then we have to put in the stops which, often at least, determine the sense in which a sentence or a phrase is to be read. Now the whole sense and intention of Verse 27 depends on whether we put a note of interrogation, or a full stop, after the words, “Father, save me from this hour.” If we put a full stop after it, as our Revisers have done in the text, the sentence becomes a prayer, the first prayer which our Lord uttered at this strange crisis in his history. If we put a note of interrogation after it, as our Revisers have done in the margin, instead of a prayer, it is part of that argument which our Lord held with Himself before He made up his mind what He would ask for; the words are not a prayer addressed to the Almighty, but a question addressed to Himself: and in that case the sense of the

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Verse would be: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? No, I cannot say that; for, for this cause, came I to this hour. All I can say is, Father, glorify thy name."

Now it would be neither becoming nor profitable were I to enter into an elaborate grammatical argument with you, to prove that one of these readings is right, and the other wrong. It will be enough, I think, if I appeal to your common sense, and say that the more thoroughly you examine the construction of this sentence for yourselves and enter into its spirit, the more fully you will be persuaded that our Lord did not, and could not have resolved to, pray, "Father, save me from this hour," since He knew and felt, at that very moment, that He had been brought to this hour in order that, by not saving Himself, or being saved, He might save others. Had He not just compared Himself with the grain of wheat which, if it is to be fruitful, must die? Had He not just affirmed that, even to save his own life, He must lose it? Does He not in this very verse give a conclusive reason for *not* adopting the prayer, "Father, save me from this hour"? How, then, in the face of such considerations as these, can we suppose that these words are to be taken as a prayer? Surely they can only be part of the argument which our Lord held with Himself before He collected Himself for his true prayer and determined what it was to be. The Greeks had suggested to his mind another way of saving the world than that of the Cross, a way in which He might also save

Himself. And for a moment He considers their suggestion, but considers only to dismiss it as incompatible with his Father's will and with the work He had come to do.

Now if this were a mere question of grammar, in which scholars take different sides, it would not be worth even as many words as I have spent upon it. But it is also, and mainly, a question of grave religious moment. It touches the honour of our Lord. It goes far to determine what our prayers should be. If, knowing that He must die in order to live and to give life to men, our Lord nevertheless prayed that He might be spared that redeeming death, can we think of Him as highly as we do if we know that, even when such a thought had been suggested to Him by others, He instantly dismissed it from his mind, and devoted Himself to doing his Father's will in his Father's way? And as for the influence of such a conception of Him on our own character and religious life, it is but a little while since I heard a preacher of more than common power and devotedness gravely argue that, since Christ's prayer was composed of the two petitions, "Father, save me from this hour," and, "Father, glorify thy name," we should commence our prayers by urging our own wishes upon God, but always conclude by referring and submitting them to his higher will.

Now I am very far from saying that, in our communion with the Father of our spirits, we may not freely tell Him all the thoughts and desires of our hearts; but are we to *ask* Him to let us take our own way and follow

our own will, provided we add the saving clause, "But, nevertheless, thy will be done"? Is that the highest ideal of Prayer, or of Christian character, that we can frame? Surely not. Surely it would be wiser and better if, whenever we are tempted to urge our own desires on God, we should remember, *from the first*, that his will is higher, purer, kinder than our own, and ask that our wills may be lifted into harmony, into unison, with his. Surely it would be well for us if, like our Master, whenever we are tempted to say, "Father, save me from this hour," we should instantly put away the thought, and refuse to have any other prayer than, "Father, glorify thy name."

I think we may conclude, then, that, "Father, glorify thy name," was the only prayer presented by the Lord Jesus at this "crisis" in his history and in that of the world; for if, on any occasion, his words are susceptible of two interpretations, a higher and a lower, we are constrained, by all we know of Him, to put the nobler and larger construction of the two upon them. And if that be so, we have only now to ask, What is *the meaning* of this prayer?

The prayer that God would glorify Himself, or his name, *has* been taken to imply that God, the Maker and Father of us all, may have a glory altogether independent of the good of his creatures, and may even win glory for Himself by condemning his children to an everlasting ruin and torment! One would like to know what poor creature, eaten up with paltry and selfish ambitions, it was who first conceived a thought so ser-

vile and so horrible as this. Whoever he was, he must not only have conceived of God as "a magnified man," but as a magnified bad man, as a being even more cruel and selfish than himself. Such a libel on the character of the Father Almighty could only proceed from the densest ignorance, or from a depravity so complete as to be no longer conscious of itself. And to attribute such a libellous conception to the Friend and Saviour of sinners is simply to blaspheme against the Son of Man.

His prayer is as simple as it is sublime. Throughout the Bible "name" stands for "character." To "glorify" a name is, therefore, to manifest a character, to illuminate it, to render it illustrious, to bring out its full splendour. Hence the prayer of our Lord can only mean, "Father, manifest thy character *as a father*, reveal thy goodness ; let thy fatherly redeeming love shine forth in forms so splendid that men shall be compelled to recognize and respond to it. Let them see Thee as Thou art, that they may be changed into thine image, and reflect thy glory by reproducing thy goodness."

And that which makes this prayer at once most instructive for us, and most pathetic, is the fact that it could only be answered, that Jesus, even when He offered it, knew that it could only be answered, by the sacrifice of Himself. On his lips it meant, "Let Me die for the sin of the world ; let Me bear the pain and shame of the cross, that men may know and believe Thou art in very deed their Father, know and believe that thy love is an everlasting love, a love which shrinks

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from no sacrifice, and can never cease to labour for their salvation and welfare, till their salvation be effected, their welfare secured."

Read thus, our Lord's prayer shews Him to us, not as shrinking from the cross, but as embracing the cross ; not as seeking to evade death, but as freely devoting Himself to death in order that, by his death, the name, the character, the love, of God might be rendered so bright, so illustrious, that even the blindest may see it, even the most hardened may be touched and conquered by it.

But if we read it thus, in its natural and Christian sense, the Prayer becomes full of valuable, because practical, instruction for us. It teaches us how *we* ought to pray ; more specifically, it teaches us *what we are to ask for*, if we would pray as we ought, *when our soul is troubled*, agitated, confused, when for a while we may honestly doubt what our petition should be.

You are at a point, let me suppose, at which you cannot be true to your inmost convictions without running some grave risk, or incurring a loss which you dread to provoke. You take your case to the Throne, to the mercy-seat of God. And as you bow before Him, troubled in spirit, the question rises within you, What shall I say? If you resolve to say, "Father, save me from this hour ;" if you ask that you may be true to your convictions and yet suffer no loss, *I* will not condemn you ; I dare not even affirm that *God* will condemn you ; for He knows our weakness and makes large allowance for us all. But this I will say, that if,

instead of praying, “Father, save me from this hour,” your prayer should be, “Father, glorify thy name:” if, *i.e.*, you ask that, with loss or without it, you may be kept true to your convictions, if you are willing to sacrifice what you hold dear in order that you may glorify God and help to further and spread the convictions for which you suffer,—then God your Father will very certainly approve your prayer, and you will rise far nearer to the Christian ideal than if to be saved from loss were well-nigh as much to you as to be loyal to the truth.

Again: if you are in any deep distress, if any pain of body oppress you or any wound to the heart, if you have lost health, or energy, or fortune, or hope; and as you come before God the question rises, “What shall I say to Him?” *I* could not condemn you, I dare not affirm that *God* will condemn you, if you should ask that you may be redeemed from the oppressions of pain, disease, care, fear, or wounded love and impaired confidence. It is but natural that such a desire should rise within you, and that you should utter it in the ears of the Divine Mercy and Compassion. But if, instead of crying, “Father, save me from this hour,” you could honestly say, “*Father, glorify thy name; Help me to bear my burden, or relieve me from it, as may be best for me, or for my fellows, and therefore most for thy glory,*”— who can doubt that this would be the nobler prayer of the two, the more acceptable to your Father in heaven, because it springs from that which is likest Him within your soul?

Finally, if when you reach a still soror strait, when it is not you who suffer, but one dearer than yourself, and you can only stand by and see your beloved pass through days of anguish and nights of weariness, and slowly travel down to the bourne at which he and you must part, he to tread the common road into the great darkness, and you to return, maimed and crippled, to the toil and burden of life,—who would have the heart to blame you if, in your agony, you should cry unto God to spare you, to avert the stroke of death, and not to condemn you to pass the poor remnant of your days solitary and forsaken? No man who knows himself, and can put himself in your place, would dare to blame you. Nor is God angered by the prayers of love even when *his* love will not suffer Him to grant them: though He refuse the prayer, He reads and approves the love which prompts it. But, none the less, *you* know as well as I do that there is a higher prayer than, "Father, save me from this hour." And if, in the strength of faith, you could honestly say, "Father, glorify thy name; Shew thy goodness, illustrate thy love, whether by taking this dear one to Thyself and by enabling me to confide him to a tenderness beyond my own, or by restoring him to life and health,"—you do not need to be told that this would be to breathe the very spirit of Him who said, "Thy will, not mine, be done."

We do not enough consider, my brethren,—it is very hard for us to remember when the cold shadows of death and bereavement fall on us—that we rarely have such an opportunity of glorifying God as the bereaving

stroke of death offers us. When we are in our best moods, when we are most deeply conscious of all that God has done for us, we often long for some great thing to do for Him. And, at last, we get it, each in his turn. For what greater thing can we do for Him than to take patiently the stroke which cuts our hearts in two, and takes from us that which we love and value most? If when the angel and minister of death draws near, and robs us of our best beloved, we can meet him with an unfaltering front; if we can go on our lonely way with a cheerful courage, or even with an unmurmuring resignation, because we believe that death means "more life and fuller" for those whom we have lost awhile, and are sure that even our loss will somehow turn to gain,—what more emphatic and convincing proof can we give that we really believe the truths we profess to believe, and that these truths are of a virtue and a potency to sustain the soul under the heaviest shocks and the keenest wounds of time and change? When do we get such a chance of glorifying God, or of benefiting men by leading them to crave the grace which is capable of sustaining us in an hour so bitter and so dark?

O it is very hard—harder than many of you can imagine—for any reflective preacher, any man who speaks to himself as well as to others, to take this tone and pursue this line of thought. And for myself I confess I never can take it without some touch of the superstitious awe with which an ancient Greek or Roman listened to ill-omened words; without hearing an inward voice which demands, "What if God should take you at

your word, and expose *you* to the trial to which He has exposed so many of those to whom you speak, and, after all, you should prove unable to face the test?" But, none the less, I am bound to pursue this line of thought with you, and to urge it upon any who may now be mutely asking, How *are* we to bear this heavy burden? How *can* we ever reconcile ourselves to so great a loss?

Here is your supreme opportunity for glorifying God. If, instead of refusing to be comforted and exhausting yourselves in fruitless struggles against a decree which you are powerless to repeal, you can brace yourselves to make the sacrifice which God has required of you, to consent to his will from the heart, and to bear your irreparable loss with patience, with courage, with hope, you will be following Him who, even when his soul was most troubled, would not say, "Father, save me from this hour," but only and simply, "Father, glorify thy name;" and that, although He knew his prayer to mean, "Father, I *embrace* the cross." In that divine fellowship of suffering and patience there may be, there should be, a supreme consolation for you. If there is not, the kindest lips can but be dumb before a sorrow like unto your sorrow.

## XXIII.

### *THE GOSPEL TO THE GREEKS.*

#### VI.—THE ANSWER.

“There came, therefore, a voice out of heaven, saying, I both have glorified it and will glorify it again.”—JOHN xii. 28.

AFTER He had been doomed to death by the Sanhedrin, and while its officers were still seeking, that they might “take” Him, certain Greeks came to Jesus, to announce their adhesion to his cause, and even, if Tradition may be trusted, to invite Him to abandon the ungrateful Jews, and to go with them to some foreign court in which they were authorized to assure Him of an honourable reception. When He saw these Gentiles approach Him in an attitude of faith and reverence, He turned to his disciples, and exclaimed with a tone of serious yet joyful satisfaction, “The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified !” for in the homage of these Greeks He found a prediction of the obedience unto life eternal of the whole Gentile world.

That He knew *how* He was to be glorified, on what terms He was to draw all men unto Himself, is evident from the fact that He instantly began to speak to his

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new disciples of the grain of wheat which must *die* if it is to bring forth fruit, to teach them that no man can save his life except by losing it, and to invite them to follow Him in the path of self-sacrifice if they would be glorified together with Him.

And yet, for a moment, his soul was "troubled," *i.e.*, agitated and confused by the suggestion which the Greeks had thrown out; and for a moment He pauses to consider whether He might save the world without loading it with the guilt of his death, whether by turning to the Gentiles—as St. Paul afterwards did—and teaching and saving *them*, He might not secure the salvation of the world. "What shall I say?" He cries. "Shall I say, *Father, save me from this hour*, from this dark fate? No, I cannot say that. It was to bear this fate that I have come to this hour. I can only say, *Father, glorify thy name*, reveal thy character, prove Thyself to be the Father of men, manifest thy fatherly and redeeming love in a form so illustrious and convincing that they may know and believe that Thou art their Father, know and believe that thy love shrinks from no sacrifice by which their welfare may be secured."

This, as I tried to shew you a week ago, is the true meaning of the Prayer recorded in this and the previous Verse, and implies the true ideal of Prayer. It teaches us both how to pray, and what to ask for, if we would pray as we ought. When *our* souls are troubled, and we are tempted to say, "Father, save us from this hour; save us from the risks, pains, losses, burdens, strokes, we fear," however natural, however pardonable, such a

prayer may be, we should remember—if we are to be true followers of Christ, we must remember—that there is a far nobler and higher prayer than this, and strive to cry from the heart, “Father, glorify thy name ; Father, we accept any risk, any pain, any loss, any burden, any stroke, by which thy name, thy character, thy love, may be illustrated, by which thy truth may be brought home to our fellows or ourselves, and the borders of thy kingdom may be advanced,—even as our Master embraced the cross, and freely devoted Himself to death for us all.”

This, then, was the burden of our Lord’s prayer at the supreme crisis of his history ; and we are now to consider the Answer to that prayer : “There came a voice out of heaven, saying, I both have glorified it and will glorify it again.” But because the strain of emotion and desire to which this Prayer invites us is very high, very hard for us to attain ; because, therefore, we may doubt whether *we* are called to breathe habitually an atmosphere so rare and difficult, suffer me, before we enter on the Answer to it, to shew you, very briefly, that even this Prayer, sublime as it is, does not stand alone ; that it fairly represents the habitual strain of our Lord’s intercourse with his Father in heaven ; and that He does urge and command us to adopt it and make it our own.

What was his cry, a cry thrice repeated, in the passion of Gethsemane ? Was it not, “Father, if it be possible,” *i.e.*, if it be consistent with thy fatherly and loving will, “let this cup pass from me ;” but, nevertheless, in any

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case, "thy will, not mine, be done"? And what, after all, is the substance and burden of the prayer which we call *The Lord's Prayer*, but which we might rather call *The Church's* prayer, since He has put it into our lips, and the whole Christian world, generation after generation, has accepted it as the supreme model of devotion? So often as we use it, do we not ask our Father in heaven that his name may be hallowed, *i.e.*, that his character may be recognized and reverenced, that his kingdom may come, that his will may be done on earth as in heaven? True, that in the very heart of the Prayer there lies the petition, "Give us, day by day, our daily bread;" but what more, on any Christian interpretation of it, does that petition mean than this: "So long as it is thy will that we should live, supply us with the simplest necessities of life; keep us alive, from day to day, all the days of our appointed time"? And no sooner is this petition ejaculated than we instantly rise once more into the purely spiritual realm, and ask for forgiveness and the power to forgive, for exemption from any temptation we are unable to bear, for grace to overcome any and every temptation we are called to meet. Fairly read, this daily prayer of ours is but the prayer, "Father, glorify thy name," written out a little larger: what we virtually ask in it is simply that the name, the character, of God may be manifested and recognized, that his will may be adopted and obeyed, both by us and by our fellow men.

We cannot, therefore, escape the conclusion that the prayer of Christ in the Temple represents the habitual

strain of his mind and heart ; we cannot plead that it is too high and difficult for our habitual use ; for we do habitually use it in the daily prayer we have learned from Him.

And, difficult as it is for us to rise to this height of devotion, we have one great encouragement to make the attempt in the fact that, when we do pray thus, our prayer is sure to be answered. "Father, glorify thy name," cries the Son ; and the Father replies, "I both have glorified it and will glorify it again." The answer is a mere echo of the prayer, as it always must be when we can say, "Thy will be done ;" for what is more certain than that the will of God must be done, whether with our will or against it ? But just as the echo from the heights flings back our cry upon us, in our own cadence indeed, and yet with all the harshness and discord, all the scream, purged out of it, and falls upon the ear with a strange charm, an unearthly music, so, I believe, we shall find it here. There is more, much more, in the Answer than there is in the Prayer, in the echo than in the cry which awakened it. In the prayer, "Father, glorify thy name," at least as it issues from our lips, if there is the clear ring of faith and of sincere desire, there are also harsh tones of doubt and fear ; or, at best, there is the wail of a desire which, as we assume, has not been gratified. And when, in answer to our prayer, there falls the divine response from heaven, "I both have glorified it and will glorify it again," *i.e.*, "I never have failed and never can fail to reveal my character, to manifest my fatherly and all-redeeming love,

to the children of men,"—is there not much more in the answer than in the prayer? Is not our desire sent back to us in the form of an assurance, an assurance that it has been already gratified, although we did not know it, and that it will be even more fully gratified, although we may not see how? Is there not a strange and sacred charm, a sweet and more than earthly music, in such a response as this?

Yet no one who brings an open and a Christian mind to the consideration of the text can doubt that this is the very response it encourages us to expect. I know, indeed, that certain commentators see no more in these words than a promise that, as at other critical periods in the history of our Lord, a great voice from Heaven had borne testimony to Him, so He would continue to receive such testimonies to the end; while others take the Verse to mean that as God had glorified his name among the Jews, in the past, so, in the future, He would glorify it among the Gentiles. But do you not at once feel that such a treatment of this Divine utterance is too technical, too trivial? If it is not wise to put a sharp, definite, and limited meaning on any oracle, it is surely unwise to put any but the largest meaning on this oracle from the very throne of God.

Our best thoughts of the almighty and eternal Ruler of the universe must needs be imperfect; for his thoughts and ways are high above ours as the heavens above the earth. But they become needlessly imperfect if we place any but the broadest and most generous construction on the words in which He reveals his character and

will. And if we put on these words the largest meaning they will bear, they can mean no less than this: that always and everywhere, in all ages and among all races, it both has been, and will be, the work of God to manifest Himself to men as the Father, as their Father and ours; as loving us, therefore, with a love stronger than sin or death; and as ever training us to enter into and enjoy all the blessings of his love, all the virtues, graces, and privileges of his children. It is the constant, unchanging, eternal attitude of God our Father to mankind which these thrice-sacred words disclose; and hence there are no words which should be more dear to us or more precious, no words which we should more peremptorily refuse to limit or degrade. For, taken thus, in their largest fullest sense, they are a perpetual prophecy of hope. They assure us that, so often as we can sincerely adopt our Lord's prayer, we may expect the selfsame answer to our prayer. They assure us that no man can say, "Father, glorify thy name," and mean what he says, but the Voice from heaven will reply, whether we hear it or not, "I both have glorified it and will glorify it again." For as it is the one sovereign work of God to shew Himself our Father, to convince our doubting hearts that He holds us in his fatherly embrace, and to win us to the obedience and enjoyment of his love, He can never deny Himself, and therefore can never deny our prayer.

"But, after all," it may be asked, "what is there in such an answer to prayer as this to make it of a supreme value to us? or, rather, What is there in such an answer

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to induce us to pray? If the prayer, 'Father, glorify thy name,' be equivalent to, 'Father, thy will be done,' why need we ask, what are we the better for asking, Him to do his will, when that Will will very certainly be done whether we ask or whether we do not? What difference will our praying make?"

It will make all the difference in the world—at least to you. No doubt the Divine Will will be accomplished whether with your prayers or without them. But to pray, to say from the heart, "Father, thy will, not mine, be done," is to consent to that Will, to adopt it, to make it your own. And does it make no difference to you whether or not it is *your* will that is done, as well as God's? Is it all the same to you whether you are swept down the great current, ignorant of the direction in which it carries you, and exhausting yourselves in struggles against it, because you do not know that it is carrying you home; or whether you freely commit yourselves to it, with an unfaltering confidence, a sustaining acquiescence and trust, because you know Who it is that guides its course and whither it is bearing you?

In our simplicity, or our self-will, we often speak as if no prayers were of any great value to us save those in which we dictate our terms to God, and get from Him whatever we ask: but who that pauses to reflect does not shrink from "the misery of a granted prayer" if this be what Prayer means? Who does not see that Prayer can have no higher office or function than to lift our weak wavering wills into a stedfast accord with the

Divine Will ; and that it can bring no more precious reward than to let us see the wisest, purest, kindest Will in the universe being done with our full sympathy and consent ? If prayer did no more for us than this, from what miseries would it save us, from what waste of energy and time, from what pain and conflict ? What composure it would bring us, what courage, what hope and joy, even in the darkest hours of change and loss, of sorrow and bereavement ?

But this is very far from being all that Prayer can do for us, very far from being even the best that it can do. Many of us have learned that it is of no use to strive against the will of God, that it is wiser and better to submit to it, that our only chance of strength and peace lies in heartily consenting to it. We may even have convinced ourselves that, so far as we personally are concerned, it is a good Will, a truly paternal and loving Will, bent on our welfare and salvation. But when we look out on the world at large, and note what men are, and see evil in many forms still prevailing over good ; when we observe in how many the better part is overborne by sordid cravings, or by animal passions and lusts, and find only too many proofs that the world as a whole, and even the Church in part, still turns aside from the living God to serve the idols of the flesh, or the market, or the schools,—ah, then, we falter where we firmly trod : his will for the world is no longer clear to us, his fatherly love for all men grows dubious to us ; and if we still cry, “ Father, glorify thy name,” it is with the sad conviction that his Name has not yet been

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glorified, and a half-despairing fear that it may not be glorified till we have long passed from the scene. We see so little, and so dimly ; and yet we often feel and speak as if we saw all. Our days are but a span ; and we are, not unnaturally, impatient with the Inhabitant of Eternity, to whom a thousand years are but as a day. Many of you will remember how Carlyle, even as he lay a-dying, cried out against God, "He does *nothing!*" Wise as he was, he did not see that God was at least teaching him the patience and self-control which he had lacked all his life. Tenacious as his memory was, he forgot how many great things God had done in the world even in *his* day, albeit the fall of the French Empire and the rise of Prussia to imperial power was "a providence" after his own heart. And *we* are more forgetful than he was, and not so wise. To us, too, it often seems that God does nothing, even when there is the utmost need that He should be up and doing, although most of us would not care perhaps to put the thought into words, or blurt it out in so blunt a form.

It is at such times as these, when faith is tried till it well-nigh fails, when the hopes cherished by faith are flatly contradicted by all which sight perceives and reports, that, if we are true to our Master, we discover the full power of Prayer. For no sooner do we cry, "Father, glorify thy name, *do* thy will, manifest thy character, reveal thy love in forms so glorious that men may see and believe," than we hear the heavenly Voice within us, proclaiming, "I both have glorified it and will glorify it again"; that is to say, in answer to our

prayer, we receive the assurance that God's will *is* being done, and that it is a good and loving will, the will of a Father who is ever seeking the welfare of his children. In the tender and sublime fellowship of prayer we are assured that He never has left the world, and never will leave it; that He is working for its redemption in ways we cannot see or cannot appreciate; working none the less truly, none the less surely, toward the end of his love because He shews long patience and much forbearance by the way. To us, personally, the Voice seems to say: "My child, all is well; for am not I, your Father, on the throne? Your will *is* one with mine, for you crave the very end I have in view, even though it is not quite one with mine as to the way in which that end should be pursued. It is your love for Me, and for men, which makes you impatient; and shall I not bear with the impatience which springs from love? But be of good cheer, and stablish your heart. I have not abandoned my task. As I have worked hitherto, so I still work, and shall for ever work, until it be accomplished." While to us, collectively, it seems to say: "Children, be patient, and have no fear for the world. It is *my* world. I am the Father of all men, and their Redeemer. Will you not trust Me to finish my work, and to draw all men unto Myself, that where I am there they also may be?"

Now if Prayer can do all this for us, if it can move us to adopt the will of God, and teach us to rest in that Will as far wiser and kinder than our own; if, when our souls are most troubled, it can persuade us that all is going well with the world because the Father Al-

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mighty is even now both ruling and redeeming it, and inspire us with the hope that all will go better still when the end shall crown the work,—will any man say that prayer is of no value and wins no answer, even if it should never bring him any other answer than this? What better or nobler answer could it bring him? And yet, as we are now dealing with the purely spiritual realm, the realm of inward thought and emotion, of conviction and hope and desire, none of the ordinary objections to Prayer have any validity here. For this inward answer to prayer may be given without any violation of the laws of nature, without any interference with the sequences of cause and effect.

I am not denying, remember, that there may be miraculous answers to prayer. How could I do *that* when my text speaks of a Voice from heaven uttering audible words? But that aspect of our theme I postpone to the next discourse, when I hope to consider what the multitude made of this Answer to prayer,—a multitude in which, if I mistake not, we shall find representatives of most of the modern schools of thought; from the Materialistic, which knows of no heavenly Voice but a clap of thunder; and the Agnostic, which may admit a Voice, but neither knows what it means, nor believes that any one can tell what it means; up to that of the most advanced Religionists, who need no miracle. For the present, I have only sought to urge upon you that Answer to Prayer which is independent of all such considerations as these. And I think you will admit that, if Prayer brings us to a free and

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cheerful adoption of the will of God, and assures us that that will is the fatherly and redeeming will of the Lord and Lover of all souls, whatever else it may bring us, it can confer no blessing upon us worthy to be compared with this.

## XXIV.

### *THE GOSPEL TO THE GREEKS.*

#### VII.—WHAT THE ANSWER MEANT.

“The multitude, therefore, that stood by and heard, said that it had thundered. Others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, Not for my sake did this voice come, but for your sake.”—JOHN xii. 29, 30.

THAT a great miracle is assumed in these Verses, and even a miraculous answer to prayer, we cannot deny, and have no wish to deny. We cannot deny it ; for an audible Voice from heaven is not to be heard every day. And we have no wish to deny it ; for as the Psalmist argues, “He that formed the eye, shall he not see ? He that moulded the ear, shall he not hear ?” so we may argue, “He that formed the tongue, shall He not speak, if the occasion be worthy of his voice and his children need to hear his words ?”

That the occasion *was* worthy is evident the moment we remember what it was. At each previous crisis of our Lord’s history, when He had solemnly devoted Himself to the work his Father had given Him to do, the Voice of God had been heard, accepting and ap-

proving his self-consecration : at his Baptism, when He consciously dedicated Himself to fulfilling the righteous and loving will of God ; at his Transfiguration, when He devoted Himself to "the exodus he was to accomplish at Jerusalem," the death by which He was to glorify God, the sacrifice by which He was to finish his work. And now, once more, when, with the Cross full in view, He freely embraces the cross ; when He refuses to pray, "Father, save me from this hour," when his only cry is, "Father, glorify thy name, reveal thy character, manifest thy fatherly and redeeming love," the great Voice from heaven responds to his renewed act of self-devotion with the assurance, "I both have glorified it and will glorify it again."

When should we expect to hear the voice of God if not at such supreme moments as these ? And yet, as Jesus Himself assures us, whether the Voice said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him," or, "I both have glorified my name and will glorify it again," it came, not for his sake, but for the sake of them that stood by. *He* needed no miracle to assure Him of his Father's love. *He knew* that the Father heard Him always. Miracles are a condescension to human needs, and to human infirmities, in which He did not share. They were given to teach and assure his disciples ; not to teach and assure *Him*. They are recorded for *our* instruction, not for his honour. They are not meant even for those who can believe without seeing, but for those who must see before they can believe.

And this miracle had a very special warrant and justification. It was wrought mainly for the sake of some new disciples,—to confirm the faith of certain Greeks who had come to Him in the Temple to profess their faith in Him, and perhaps also to point out to Him how He might evade the malice of the Jews. His words—the words reported in the immediate context—contain, as we have seen, his Gospel to the Gentiles, an epitome of the whole substance of the teaching which, in larger and more various forms, He had already given to the Jews. Was it not appropriate that this brief Gospel to the Gentiles should be confirmed by a sign or wonder from heaven? that, so to speak, these Greeks, and the Gospel to the Greeks, should have a miracle all to themselves? Can you not understand how profoundly they would be impressed by an audible response to the prayer of Jesus, by a great Voice sounding out of heaven? how their faith would be ratified and strengthened by it? how they would talk of it when they got home, and allege it as a proof that they had not followed cunningly devised fables in bowing down before the power and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ? how they would affirm that they had been eyewitnesses of his majesty when He received honour and glory from God the Father, and had heard the Voice that came out of heaven while they were with Him in the holy temple?

If we are to believe in miracles at all, was not *this* the very occasion on which we might expect a miracle? and were not these the very men for whose sake we might think it would be wrought?

Nevertheless, we do well not to make too much of miracles. The signs are for believers, as St. Paul tells us, or for those of them who must see as well as believe, not for the unbelieving. To the hostile, or even to the spiritually uneducated, they have no message, bring no conviction. The disciples of Christ, and even, we may hope, his new Greek disciples, not only heard a Voice, but understood what it said. But the multitude, the mob of Jews who thronged the Temple courts, heard no Voice, or, if they thought they heard a Voice, they heard no intelligible words. Some thought it was only a clap of thunder, pealing above the roofs of the Temple cloisters. Others fancied, indeed, that they had heard the tones of a Voice loud and sweet as an angel's ; but they did not feel that it had said anything to them. For, just as the eye sees only what it brings the power of seeing, so the ear hears only what it brings the power of hearing. To Peter Bell,

A primrose by a river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more ;

while to Wordsworth himself no flower could be so mean but that it would bring him "thoughts that lie too deep for tears." And the delicacy, the apprehensiveness and power, of all our faculties depends, in like manner, on the training they have had, and on the quality of the soul that sits behind them. The word which, to a wolf, is but a startling noise, becomes a definite command to a dog, and an intelligible utterance to a child. The Materialist knows of no voice from

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heaven but a peal of thunder ; he is not likely to hear a Voice he has not trained himself to hear and understand ; while the Psalmist, who *has* cultivated the spiritual sense, hears even in a peal of thunder the great and terrible Voice of the Lord. The Agnostic may admit a Voice, but he cannot tell, nor does he believe that you can tell, either whose Voice it is or what it says ; while an Apostle affirms that, although there are so many kinds of voices in the world, even things without life yielding sound, no one of them is without significance. Is it any marvel that the man who denies the very existence of the spiritual realm, denies that any Divine Voice has ever spoken to men ? Is it any wonder that the man who denies our capacity to apprehend and interpret the Divine, even if he admit there be anything Divine to interpret, should doubt whether prayer is of any avail or elicits any response ? If we would know the truth about good and evil, is it not reasonable that we should turn to those who have "exercised their senses to discriminate good and evil" ? If we would understand what prayer can do for us, and what response it can win, ought we to go to those who never pray, either because they deny that there is any one to pray to, or because they affirm that, if there be a God, we can never know what He is like or tell whether He makes any reply ? Surely it is but reasonable that, on spiritual themes, we should go to spiritual men, just as on points of science we turn to men of science. Surely it is but reasonable that, if we would learn how we ought to pray, what things to ask for and what to

expect, we should betake ourselves to those who have lived in a constant communion with God, and, above all, to Him who was one with the Father and of one will with Him.

If we turn to *them*, they will tell us, with one voice, that there is a Father Almighty to whom we may pray, and who both hears and answers prayer. If we turn to *Him*—and He is our Exemplar as well as our Saviour—we shall learn much which even they cannot teach us, or can only teach us as they have learned it from Him.

Nor, on going to Him for instruction on Prayer, could we meet Him on any more auspicious occasion than on that referred to in the passage before us. For, here, He has at least three lessons to teach us. The passage teaches us (1) that the Providence of God, as it works and changes, indicates what our prayer should be. It teaches us (2) that our safest, as well as our highest, prayer may be summed up in the words, “Thy will be done.” And it teaches us (3) that, when this is the sum and substance of our prayer, our prayer will infallibly be both answered and approved.

1. It teaches us to find in the Providence of God the best and truest indications of what our prayer should be. When these Greeks were brought to Jesus by Andrew and Philip, Jesus knew within Himself—we are not told how—that the hour was at hand in which his Father had ordained that, by being lifted up from the earth, He should draw all men unto Himself ; for, as they entered his presence, He exclaimed, “The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.” He shewed that He

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also knew *how* the Son of Man was to be glorified by instantly speaking of the grain of wheat, which must *die* if it is to live and to bring forth fruit. In short, He saw in that striking event what the will of God was, and at once heartily adopted that high Will and turned it into the Prayer, "Father, glorify thy Name, reveal thy character, manifest and magnify thy love, even though that love can only be magnified as it binds me to the Cross."

As that event taught Him the will of his Father and shaped his prayer, so all events that happen to us, could we but penetrate to the hidden meaning, the spiritual intention, with which they are fraught, indicate what God's will is for us, and should, therefore, give form to our petitions and desires. And often—commonly perhaps, if only we are thoughtful and sincere—we *can* reach their meaning, and learn from them what He would have our prayer to be. Take a familiar illustration. When David's child was "very sick" and like to die, he flung himself night after night on the ground, and besought God for the child in such an agony of grief that the elders of his household trembled for his reason, if not for his life. Deaf to their remonstrances, he would neither rise nor eat: for as yet he knew not what the will of the Lord might be. "Who can tell," he said, "whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?" But no sooner does he hear that the child is dead, *i.e.*, no sooner does he learn what the will of the Lord really is, than he submits to and embraces that Will; he rises from the earth, ceases to weep and afflict his soul, calls for food, changes his apparel, anoints

his head, and comforts himself with the thought that, though his child cannot return to him, he shall one day go after his boy and rejoin him in some other and better world. The event declares the will of God ; and therefore he suffers it to determine, to change, the whole posture of his soul.

Should not we, then, who have seen David's Lord and Son, who have sat at the feet of Jesus and learned of Him,—should not we, when our soul is troubled within us, seek, first of all, to ascertain what the will of God is, and, then, when we see what it is, say from the heart, “Father, thy will be done”? Is there any other hope of strength and peace for us? We cannot alter the decrees of Perfect Wisdom, Perfect Love. We should not so much as wish to alter them. What remains, then, but to consent to that Will, and to rest in the conviction that it moves only at the prompting of an infallible wisdom and to secure the ends of an infinite and unchanging love? Peace and vigour are impossible to us on any other terms.

2. Nay, more: even before the event, before we know what the will of God is, it is our safest as well as our highest prayer, to say at once, and ere we can say nothing else, “Father, do thy will; Father, glorify thy name.” David wept and fasted while his child lived, in the hope that the little one might be spared; and it was natural that he should indulge and express that hope. But who does not see both that he would have risen to a nobler height of faith, and would have spared himself a long and unavailing agony if, *from the first*, he had

resigned himself to the will of God, whatever it might be? We do not blame him, no man with a fatherly heart can have the heart to blame him, for his futile supplications, for striving to turn the will of God his way. We do not even say that the agony, which a stronger faith would have spared him, was altogether in vain. It may have purified his heart, and deepened his penitence, though it did not bring the response to his request which he desired. A man of far keener and larger spiritual insight than he has taught us how natural such supplications may be, how pardonable, how, even though they do not gain the desired answer, they may bring a completer knowledge of the Divine Will, and a more hearty reliance upon it. When, lest he should be unduly exalted by the abundance of his revelations, a thorn or stake in the flesh was allotted to St. Paul, he thrice besought the Lord that it might depart from him ; nor desisted from the prayer till he received the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee ; for strength is made perfect in weakness." But *then*, when once that assurance had come, though it was not the answer for which he had asked and looked, he could, not only consent to his Lord's will, but "gladly," "most gladly," gloried in the very affliction which had before seemed so intolerable to him, and rejoiced in the weakness which was to be hallowed by the indwelling and outshining of a Divine strength. No one will deny that it was natural for him to pray for deliverance from "the messenger of Satan sent to buffet" him. No one will deny that it was in and through his longing and cry for deliverance

that a new revelation was vouchsafed him, and that he was taught to acquiesce, to "take pleasure" in the will of God. And yet who does not see that even this holy Apostle would have risen into a still loftier altitude of faith, and have spared himself a long agony of spirit, which he could only compare to the writhings of a poor wretch impaled on a stake, had he, *from the first*, recognized the will of God, and so converted, as he afterwards did convert, his very agony into a triumph, and his weakness into strength?

But when we turn to Him who was very man, and yet was more than man, this is precisely what we do find, both in the Temple and in Gethsemane. With Him, if with Him alone, the Will of God *stands first, from the first*. In the coming of the Greeks He sees the coming of the Cross. He feels that it is God's will that He should die, to take away the sin of the world and to redeem the world unto life eternal. And He does not shrink. If for a moment He asks, "Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour?" his instant reply is, "No, I cannot say that; for, for this cause, came I unto this hour." And, hence, He will utter no other prayer than this, "Thy will be done; thy name be glorified," although He knows that the fatherly will of God can only be done, and his love revealed and magnified, as He Himself lays down his life for us all.

This is the very height, the very heroism, of faith. But it is a height to which He calls us, weak as we are. For, while consecrating Himself to death, does He not also teach us that we too must be prepared to lose our

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life if we would save it ; and that we can only hope to be with Him where He is, and to share his glory, as we follow Him in the path of self-devotion and self-sacrifice ?

3. Our encouragement to take this high and difficult path is that, if we thus pray ; that if, early or late, we bring ourselves to ask and desire that the pure and kindly will of God may be done, whatever discipline, or grief, or loss the doing of that Will may involve for us, our prayer is sure to be answered ; since, happily, God's will must be done, whether with our will or against it. All spiritual men, all men who have really prayed, affirm with one consent that, when they *have* risen to this height of spiritual emotion and desire, they have received an answer to their prayers which, if it has belied their expectations, has also outrun their hopes. Nor can any man who believes in God at all doubt that prayer must bring an answer when prayer is simply some variation on the theme of the supreme prayer, " Thy will be done." The only doubt which suggests itself to any mind on this point is whether we are any the better, whether we gain anything, by asking that a Will may be done which is sure to be done whether we ask for it or not. And here, as we saw but a little while since,<sup>1</sup> our answer is complete. For " it makes all the difference in the world, at least to us, whether the Will which is done throughout the universe be *our* will as well as God's, whether we are swept down the great current ignorant of the direc-

<sup>1</sup> See page 319.

tion in which it carries us, and exhausting ourselves in struggles against it because we do not know that it is carrying us home, or whether we freely commit ourselves to it because we know Who it is that guides and controls its course, and whither it is bearing us."

## XXV.

### *THE GOSPEL TO THE GREEKS.*

#### VIII.—THE CRISIS OF THE WORLD.

“Now is a judgment of this world ; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”—JOHN xii. 31.

BESIDES its main and ruling intention, which every devout reader of the New Testament might discover for himself, this remarkable and pregnant sentence contains echoes of and correspondences with other sentences of this Gospel to the Greeks which might escape any but a reflective and studious mind. Let me, before I enter on our main theme, point out two of them.

In the coming of the Greeks Jesus saw the coming of the Cross, and cried, “The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.” Hence He would not pray, “Father, save me from this hour ;” He will only say “Father, glorify thy name,” *i.e.*, manifest thy character, reveal and magnify thy fatherly redeeming love. And to this prayer a Voice from heaven replies, “I both have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” In that Voice some who stood by heard nothing but a clap of thunder ; while others heard a voice indeed, and a voice loud and

clear and sweet as that of an angel, but knew not whence it came nor what it said. Jesus knew, however ; for in the text He both echoes and interprets that Divine utterance. He knew that the Father *had* already glorified his name ; for He says, "Now *is* there a judgment of this world." And He knew that the Father *would* glorify it again : for He says, "The prince of this world *shall be* cast out."

It also echoes and illustrates the words on which I spoke in our last Discourse. "Not for my sake," said Jesus to his disciples, "did this Voice come ; but for your sakes." *He* needed no miracle from heaven to assure Him either that his Father heard Him always, or that *his* Father was the Father and Redeemer of all men. How should *He* need signs from heaven who could find signs and wonders in the common events of earth ; who saw in the coming of the Greeks the coming of the Cross, and in the coming of the Cross the glorification of the Son of Man ? *He proves* that He needs no sign from heaven by reading in these earthly events an assurance that, even then, the world was being brought to judgment, a judgment in which the prince of this world should be cast out.

And so we reach the main intention, the ruling significance, of this matterful verse. In the events then transpiring around Him, and in the prophetic emotions they excited within Him, Christ found a sign, or signal, of three spiritual transactions of the widest scope, the gravest moment : a sign (1) of the judgment of this world ; (2) of the expulsion of its former but usurping

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lord: and (3) of the accession of its true and lawful Prince. Let us try to see what He saw, and as He saw it.

1. And, first, the Judgment of this World. "Now is the judgment"—literally, "now is *a crisis*"—"of this world." The words are simple, but none the less their sense is ambiguous; for we have imported into the leading word of this simple phrase—"judgment"—a significance it does not bear. With us "to judge" means to *try*, or to put on trial; and, according to the popular usage, it almost always implies that the person tried is more or less a culprit: while "a judgment" almost invariably implies either a sentence of condemnation or a punishment of guilt.

These connotations of the word we have derived mainly, I suppose, from the form of our criminal jurisprudence, which is so guarded by preliminary examinations that a very large majority of the prisoners brought to bar are found guilty; while the best that any one of them can hope for is a verdict of acquittal. In short, we have transferred the legal sense of the word to its moral and religious use, and so have charged it with implications of severity of which the poor word itself is altogether innocent.

We might and should have been saved from the blunder had we bethought ourselves what the religious use of the word really is. For some two thousand years it bore a very different significance among the Jews to that which it carries for us. With them, "to judge" meant mainly "to rule." Hence they called their earlier rulers *The Judges*; and even their later Psalmists invited

all things in heaven and on earth to rejoice because the Lord was coming "to judge," *i.e.*, to rule the world. Had Jehovah been coming simply to censure, or condemn, the inhabitants of the earth, to bring them to his bar and pronounce sentence against them, how should they rejoice at his advent? But if He were coming to rule the world, to enrich the poor, to right the wronged, to redeem the lost, as well as to bring down the proud and to reprove the wicked, his advent might well be hailed with joy and gladness. In the New Testament even, when our Lord Jesus is spoken of as being, or as destined to be, the *Judge* of men, the context often shews that He is, or is to be, the *Ruler* of men,—not only condemning the guilty, but rewarding every man according to his works, whether they be good or bad. And if you reflect for a moment on what a Jewish, or indeed any other Oriental, Ruler was like, you will see at once how, with the Hebrews, the word came to carry associations and implications so unlike our own. For, with them, the Judge, or King, was the arbiter of every man's fate, making men rich as well as making them poor, setting them up as well as pulling them down, admitting them to posts of dignity and favour as well as dismissing them from his service and presence. All they had, yea, their very life also, hung on his word: and if he were a wise Judge, a good and benevolent King, his acts of grace and reward far outnumbered his acts of severity and condemnation.

If, then, we correct our common legal sense of the word by its common religious sense, *our* use of it by the

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ancient Biblical use, we shall understand that *to judge* is, first, to verify the moral condition of men, to put it to a decisive test, and to pronounce an equitable verdict upon it ; and, then, to treat them according to the real facts of the case, to render unto every man, good as well as bad, according to his deserts. Or, more briefly, we may say that *to judge* is, first, to ascertain character, and, then, to bring every man's outward conditions into harmony with his character.

When, therefore, our Lord speaks of Himself, or of the glorification of Himself by the death of the Cross, as a judgment of this world, He cannot mean less than this, —that the attitude which men take to Him, or to the death in which He most of all reveals the fatherly and redeeming love of God, determines what their character is, and must ultimately determine what their conditions shall be. If they recognize his goodness, if they respond to the love which He reveals, they prove themselves capable of eternal life ; while if they do not, they pronounce themselves unworthy of eternal life, and, for the present at least, incapable of it.

*For the present*, I say : for *this* is not *the* judgment, still less the *last* judgment ; it is only *a* judgment, one of many through which the world has to pass, though it is well-nigh impossible for us to conceive of any more decisive test of moral character and condition. For, consider : Christ is, on all hands, confessed to be at least the supreme incarnation of human virtue and genius, the wisest of teachers, the best of men. By all who believe Him to be one with the Father, his death is, ad-

mittedly, not only the supreme proof of his own love for men, but also the supreme revelation of God's fatherly and saving love for us all. When, therefore, He is fairly placed before us, when He is "glorified" before our eyes, the attitude we assume toward Him must be a decisive and supreme test of character. If we have any love for goodness, we cannot but love Him. If we are at all disposed to acknowledge God to be the Father of our spirits, and to carry ourselves as his children, the Cross, in which we see his redeeming love to be stronger than death and able to take away all our sins, cannot but move us to the very heart, and quicken in our hearts responses of love and obedience. Here is God, not in Nature only, but in History ; God manifest in the flesh, visible to our eyes, bearing our infirmities, casting our sins upon and behind his back, praying and beseeching us to be reconciled to Himself. And if we can behold this august yet pathetic spectacle unmoved, what more can He do for us? by what *can* we be convinced, persuaded, redeemed? To be indifferent to *the best*, the best in thought and conduct, the best in wisdom and love, the best in God as well as in man—is not that to stand self-condemned? Is it not to resist the best *in ourselves*, the highest promptings of our own judgment and conscience and heart? Is it not to adjudge ourselves incapable of virtue, of love, of religion, of all that constitutes the proper life of man? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"He who, when goodness is impressively put before him, exhibits an instinctive loyalty to it, starts forward to take its side, trusts himself to it—such a man has faith, and the root of the matter is in such a man."—*Ecce Homo.*

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It is no mere doctrine of which I am speaking to you, my brethren, but a truth which enters into and determines the whole current and bent of your practical life in the most decisive way. If you acknowledge that in Christ you find the highest revelation of the name, or character, of God ; if you only acknowledge that in Him you find the highest human wisdom, the best human goodness, and a love so disinterested, so wide and deep, so unfathomable and unchangeable, that it may well be called divine,—and yet when this decisive test is applied to your character, you make no response to it ; if his wisdom does not command your admiration and shape your conduct, his goodness your love, his purity your homage, you are judged and condemned, *self-judged* and *self-condemned*. To do nothing is, in such a case, to do all. It is to shew that there is nothing in you which answers and corresponds to the solemn and moving spectacle which has been unfolded before you. If you will not have this Man to reign over you, it can only be because you do not want to be ruled by the Wisest and the Best, nor even by that which is wisest and best in your own nature. A crisis has come to you, a judgment ; and you, alas, have been tried and found wanting.

It matters comparatively little what it is that you suffer to influence your decision. If you are so plunged in the pursuit of gain and self-indulgence that you do not attend as you should to the revelation of the Divine Grace and Love in the glorification of the Son of Man, you are judged ; you have both judged and condemned yourselves. If you are so occupied in pursuits innocent,

lawful, or even praiseworthy in themselves, so absorbed in laudable studies, or in the culture and enjoyment of your domestic affections, or in your devotion to the conduct whether of your own or of public affairs—that you have no leisure or heart for the love and service of the Son of Man, still you are judged ; you have judged and condemned yourselves. Religion itself, or what you take for Religion, may be your hindrance. On the one hand, you may be so pre-occupied with the doctrines, or the polemics, or the outward service, of the Church as to miss Christ Himself, and the power of his life, and the obedience of his will ; and, on the other hand, you may be so pre-occupied with questions of evidence, with doubts and answers to doubt, with the scientific and logical side of Religion, as to have never listened with the heart to the simple message of righteousness and love which Christ came to deliver, and which, if you but listened to it, would at once commend itself to your heart. But, in either case, in every case, you are judged by your rejection of Him, or by your indifference to Him—*self-judged, self-condemned*. The hour has come in which *you* should have glorified the Son of Man, and you did not know that the hour had struck, and that the kingdom of heaven had drawn nigh unto you. In the time of your visitation you did not accept the things of peace.

Is it too late, then ? It is never too late. Every coming of Christ to your conscience, through his Word and Spirit, is a judgment, one of many. *This* is as truly an acceptable time, a day of salvation, as any that has

gone before it. And if you now admit Christ to be Wisest and Best, and therefore the true Judge and Ruler of men ; if, in his death on the tree, you find a supreme proof of the fact that God is your Father, and loves you well enough to make any sacrifice in order to redeem you out of the hand of your iniquities ; if you commit yourself to Him in faith and love and obedience, this hour of judgment will prove an hour of salvation to you.

2. For I must now ask you to mark, that the upshot of this hour or act of judgment is not at all what those who think of judgment only in its severer aspect would have anticipated. Christ does not say, "Now is a judgment of this world ; now shall the world be *condemned*." On the contrary, He virtually says, "Now is a judgment of this world ; now shall the world be *saved*." For the judgment is to issue in the expulsion of the usurping prince of this world and the enthronement of its true Prince. The one is to be "cast out" ; the other is to be "lifted up" that He may draw all men unto Himself.

Who this false prince of the world is we can have no doubt, if at least we accept the teaching of the New Testament. The Jews habitually called Satan—the "adversary" of man and God—"the prince of this world." It is his regular Rabbinical title. And Jesus adopts both the name and the conception which underlay it. Not here alone, but again and again, this title falls from his lips, as when He said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me," or when He predicted that the

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Holy Spirit should convict men of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged.<sup>1</sup>

Now, though I know very well how repugnant this conception is to many minds, I cannot stay to vindicate it every time we meet it.<sup>2</sup> Still I may say, in passing, that, to me at least, an evil person is an easier conception, a more rational conception, than an evil principle. No one can doubt that evil, moral evil, is in the world, however unfathomable the mystery of its origin may be. But evil is of the character, of the will ; and character and will imply personality. Except, indeed, as the wrong action of free will, as a personal transgression of law, how are we to conceive of evil at all ?

But what I want you to mark is the force of the solemn and picturesque phrase, “The prince of this world shall be *cast out*.” He who, before this, had seen Satan fall like lightning from heaven, now predicts that he is to be “cast out” from the earth. And this phrase “cast out” is very suggestive ; for it is the technical phrase for *ex-communication*, for the solemn and formal expulsion of one who has sinned against the light from a synagogue, a temple, a church, from any holy place or community. To affirm, therefore, that Satan is to be cast out of the world, implies that he has no right in it. It implies that the world is a holy place, a place sanctified by a Divine Presence, and therefore a place for which he is unfit, in which his presence is an usurpation and an offence, from which he is to be solemnly and for ever expelled.

As yet, indeed, we see not that he has been expelled,

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 30 ; xvi. 11.

<sup>2</sup> See Volume i. Discourse xxi.

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whether from the world, or even from the Church. But He who "came to destroy the works of the devil," He who is able to measure all spiritual forces with a precision to which we cannot pretend, and to calculate the issue of the conflict between good and evil with an infallible prescience,—*He* here assures us that, as the result of his coming into the world, his death for the world's sin, his judgment or rule of the world, the power of evil is broken; that the supreme representative of evil is to be overcome, dethroned, driven out. He pronounces *the issue* certain, however long the conflict, the campaign, may last. He affirms that the Temple of the World is to be purged from whatsoever offendeth or loveth and maketh a lie. The prince of this world has been judged, *self-judged* and *self-condemned*, in that he stirred up men to reject their Wisest and Best, set himself, and tempted them to set themselves, against the supreme revelation of the righteousness and love of God. Sentence has gone forth against him; and, in due time, that sentence will infallibly be carried out.

O, it is a great promise, quick with the inspirations of courage and hope, and may well nerve us to carry on that conflict with evil, in ourselves and in the world around us, which often looks so hopeless that we grow weary and faint in *our* minds! Failure is impossible, however imminent it may seem. Victory is certain, however improbable it may appear, however distant it may be.

3. And great as the promise is, it is confirmed by the Verse which follows, and on which—as I have already

discussed it with you—I need but say very few words. For in the Verse : “And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself,” we are taught that the deposition of the false prince of this world is to be followed by the accession and enthronement of its true Prince. Christ also is to go out of the world by the very act by and for which the usurper is to be cast out of it. But He is to go out of it only that He may be lifted up above it, lifted to his high throne. He is to be the Judge, *i.e.*, the Ruler of the world, of *all* the world. He is to reign over it in virtue of the victory of love over death and sin. He is to reign by inspiring love, a love which will draw all men unto Him as their centre and rest, a love which in them also will conquer sin and death.

The presence of Christ, then, his revelation of the perfect goodness, the forgiving and redeeming love of our Father in heaven, was in very deed a judgment of this world ; for, by the attitude which men assumed to Him, they disclosed their true moral character and determined their condition. But, happily for us and for them, it was a judgment unto victory. It implies and guarantees the triumph of good over evil ; the expulsion of evil in all its forms and causes ; the ultimate enthronement of the perfect Goodness and Love. Christ is our Judge, and leads us to convict and condemn ourselves, only that He may be our Ruler, and redeem us out of all our sins and miseries, out even of the shame and misery of self-condemnation. And Christ is the Judge of the world, convicting all men of unbelief, of distrust of their heavenly Father and disobedience to his will, only that He may

have mercy on all, and draw them all into the peace of his perfect and gentle rule.

And if all this be true—and it *is* true—we may well conclude with St. Paul: “O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out, so far do they transcend, in love and goodness, the utmost measures of our thought !”

## XXVI.

### *THE WORD WITHIN.*

“For the commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it. Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it. But the word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.”—DEUTERONOMY xxx. 11-14.

“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise : Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven ? (that is, to bring Christ down) ; or who shall descend into the abyss ? (that is, to bring Christ up again from the dead). But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart : that is, the word of faith which we preach.”—ROMANS x. 6-8.

“WOULD you find God ?” said Plato : “*Look within.*” “*Look within,*” said Moses long before Plato was born, “if you would find the word, or commandment, of God. Look within, not above you or beyond : you need not climb to heaven for it, nor sail across the sea ; it is very nigh you, in your mouth and in your heart.” “*Look within,*” echoes and responds St. Paul, “if you would find Him who is both God and the Word of God : you need not ascend into heaven to bring Him down ; nor

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plunge into the abyss to bring Him up. He is with you, and in you. If you would find Him, look within."

Now we should have thought that the method of spiritual research prescribed by these great teachers, who beyond all question knew more of God and of the Word of God than almost any of their fellows, would have been generally adopted and pursued. If any respect is due to wisdom, character, genius, authority, inspiration, it would only be reasonable that all who desire to acquaint themselves with God and God's will should retire within themselves, and search in the depths of their own nature for any image or reflection of God, any impress of his character, any echo of his word, which would aid them to conceive rightly of Him and of his will for them ; aid them also to test and to interpret any revelation, or supposed revelation, of Him that came to them from without. Yet, for the most part, it is the very opposite of this inward method which men have pursued, and still pursue. Instead of looking *within* for a key to the external disclosures of his will which have been vouchsafed them, they have endeavoured to infer his character from his handiworks, in which He is not so instantly and vitally present as He is in themselves ; or they have brooded over words which He has spoken to the outward ear, and inferred from them abstract dogmatic conceptions of what He is and what He would have them do. And thus they have, as it were, driven the God who was nigh them far off from them, and made Him inaccessible, translating Him above the clouds of a verbal and dogmatic heaven, or trans-

porting Him across a metaphysical sea without bottom and without bounds. Age after age they have persisted in framing theological conceptions of God and of the Word of God which answered to nothing within themselves, to which no fact of their own moral experience gave substance and form and life; conceptions, therefore, which awoke in them no response of affection or obedience.

Working on this outward method, the justice of God, for example, has become a quality wholly different from the justice of man; and different, not in the sense of being more pure and large, more considerate and impartial, more nobly tempered with compassion, but in a sense which absolutely makes it a positive and monstrous *injustice* when tried by human standards. God is just, they tell us; and yet God can accept the sufferings of spotless innocence in lieu of the punishment due to the sinful and disobedient! God is just, they say; and yet when He *has* accepted the sufferings of the innocent for the sins of the guilty, He may nevertheless punish the guilty for the very sins for which innocence has atoned!

In their hands, again, and as the result of following the same vicious method, the virtue of Christ becomes altogether different from virtue in man. With us, all virtue is obedience to a righteous law, conformity to an ethical standard, the faithful discharge of obligations involved in the very structure of our nature. But, according to them, the very essence of Christ's virtue lies in the fact that it was purely optional, that He was under no moral obligation to do what He did, that He

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was keeping no law ; that He was much better than He need to have been, so much better as to lay up a store of merits which, by some trick of spiritual magic, may be "conveyed" to us. Thus our very conceptions of virtue and justice are outraged in the sacred name of Religion ; and God, instead of being brought near to us, is removed far from us, carried up into some inaccessible heaven, or wafted across a pathless sea.

If we would have any solid ground for our religious convictions and hopes, we must refuse to listen to those who thus remove God and his Word to a distance from us. We must hold fast to the assurance that He is near us, and with us. We must "look within" for Him. We must seek his word in our own mouth and heart ; *i.e.*, we must test and interpret all that we are told about Him by the facts of our own moral consciousness, of our own spiritual life. Believing that we were "created in the image and after the likeness" of God ; believing, moreover, that, if we are new men in Christ Jesus, we have been "re-created in the image of Him that created us," we shall accept only such doctrines concerning God and his dealings with men as link themselves on to our own experience, and are made intelligible to us by the analogies of our own nature or the facts of our own consciousness. Only thus, indeed, can we hope that the Word of God will come home to us in power, and abide with us ; that it will seize upon, strengthen, and sanctify our reason, affections, conscience, will.

What this method of spiritual research is, and how it brings the truth home to us, convincing and persuading

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us that it *is* true and making it part of our very life, will grow more plain and clear, I hope, as we proceed to consider how certain truths, or doctrines, have been, and may be, presented to us.

1. Take what is called *the doctrine of human depravity*. One of the first spiritual facts which impresses us is, that we are sinners, that we have broken a Divine law, that there is division and strife in our inward nature, that the passions and lusts which ought to be restrained too often break from all restraint, and, by usurping a power over us to which we feel they have no just claim, injure and debase us, alienating us both from God and our neighbour. As we reflect on this mournful fact, and on the various forms it assumes, we become aware that it is a very complex and subtle fact, a fact of which it is very hard to give any reasonable account. In little children, for instance, we see tendencies to evil, rudiments of depravity, which, so far as we can judge, did not originate in their nurture or training, but had some earlier root. In ourselves, or in our neighbours, we find mysterious moral taints, infirmities of will, predispositions of blood or nerve, at variance with the main flow and set of our nature; taints and bents with which we were born, and the whole blame of which therefore we cannot honestly lay upon ourselves or on them.

Here, then, is a very complex and subtle fact which concerns us so nearly that we are compelled to seek for some rational account of it, but for which we find it hard to account. "What does the Word of God say about it?" we ask. "The Word of God," reply certain theo-

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logians, "says that Adam sinned ; and that, as he was the federal head of the race, we suffer for his sin." "We sinned in him," they say, or, "He sinned for us," or "God imputes his sin to us." On the mode in which we become guilty by his transgression they may not be agreed ; but in this they all agree—that we are responsible for it ; and that even if we should never sin ourselves, we should yet be justly condemned by God for the depravity we inherit from the father of us all. It is not only sin by which we are tainted, but *original* sin ; and if the righteousness of Christ were not imputed to all men in precisely the same sense in which Adam's transgression is imputed, every innocent babe and every ignorant heathen would be justly damned for ever.

Now quite apart from the truth or untruth of this doctrine, does it bring the Word of God home to you ? Does all that talk about "the federal headship of Adam," and your having sinned "in him" centuries before you were born, or of his guilt being "imputed" to you,—does it sound real to you ? Does it "find" you ? Is there anything in your moral consciousness which responds to it ? anything which leaps up and cries, "Yes, that is true ; I *did* sin in Adam's sin ;" or, "Yes, that is just ; his guilt *ought* to be imputed to me" ? You must be very strangely constituted if, on the contrary, it does not sound monstrously unreal to you, and monstrously unjust.

But take another version of this same doctrine, or employ another method with it. Begin with yourselves, and your own experience : begin at home, begin *within*,

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where Plato and Moses and Paul affirm that you will find both the Word of God and that which interprets it to you and convinces you of its truth. When you violate any Divine law, any law which you recognize as Divine and therefore binding upon you, are you not the worse for it? Are you not lowered in character? Are not your moral interests damaged, even if your social or commercial interests are promoted? Is it not more difficult for you to resist the next similar temptation? And if you let any sin grow into a rooted habit, do you not transmit a perilous weakness to your children? Do you not give a bias to their blood which draws them insensibly toward the very vice which has become habitual to you? Is it not in accordance with plain physiological laws that parents should transmit their temperaments and tendencies to their children as surely as they transmit some trick of feature or some tone of voice? If, then, when you are brooding over this subtle and complex fact of sin, I come to you and say: "The Word of God teaches that all sin lowers and degrades men, and that every sinful habit is transmissible from parent to child, so that we derive a moral bias from our fathers just as we receive, and possibly *in* receiving, a physical temperament from them, insomuch that all our fathers, from Adam downward, live again in us :" is not *that* a word of God which is nigh unto you, even in your own mouth and heart? Does it not come home to you, and find you? Does it not at once commend itself to you as true?

Thus put, the doctrines of human depravity and

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original sin, however much we may still dislike and repudiate the technical terms, are no longer distant abstractions which dwell high above us in some dogmatic heaven, or far from us across some metaphysical sea vexed by many cross currents and winds ; they are at our very door, nay, in our very hearts and lives.

2. Take, as another illustration, the doctrine of *the Atonement*. The great Sacrifice for sin has been regarded and described as though it were a legal or business transaction, a mere barter ; God demanding so much pain for so much sin, and quite content to accept the due amount of pain even though it be paid by Him who knew no sin, and to impute his righteousness to those who nailed Him to the cross. This conception of the Atonement, of the great reconciliation of man with God, has been stated in terms so shocking to our natural sense of justice as to push that act of Divine Grace and Love far away from all that is best and purest in our own ethical experience, and to make it, not only remote from us, but incredible. And yet this very doctrine may be so linked on to all that is most familiar, and yet most sacred, in our daily life as that we instantly respond to it, and feel it to be very nigh to us, and very true.

State it thus, for example. When we had fallen into the utmost sin and misery God, our righteous Father, set Himself to make us righteous, to redeem us from our misery by redeeming us from our sins. It was intolerable to Him that we, his children, should be left to make ourselves weak and miserable for ever by our iniquities : and hence, in the person of his Son, He came

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to shew us how fair righteousness is. He took our nature, shared our lot, bore our infirmities, suffered by and for our sins—feeling them as his own, and grieving over them, just as many a good man and woman has suffered by and for the sins of their children.

Lest this thought should be strange to any of you, suppose we went on to argue: Vicarious suffering, suffering for the sake of others, so far from being peculiar to Christ and remote from the common life of man, is a constant law of human life. The mother suffers for, and with, her babe; the father toils and endures to win the household bread; the soldier bleeds for his flag, the patriot for his country, the martyr for his faith. In short, we all of us do and must bear one another's burdens, whether or not we "fulfil the law of Christ" by bearing them voluntarily and gladly;<sup>1</sup> and the best of us do fulfil that law, cheerfully assuming the burdens of our neighbours, of our country, of our time, just as Christ assumed the burden of the whole world. Thus we are at once crucified, and glorified, with Him.

Now if, having the Atonement for my theme, I were to come to you speaking of a mystic transaction between the sacred Persons of the blessed Trinity, in virtue of which your trespasses would be forgiven, you might fairly reply, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high as heaven, and we cannot attain unto it." Or if I were to speak of Christ as your Substitute, and tell you that his righteousness is imputed to you and your sins imputed to Him, you might reasonably reply: "All

<sup>1</sup> Galatians vi. 2.

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that is shadowy and unreal to us, very hazy and remote ; it does not accord with our sense of justice : it lies as on the other side of a great sea which we can never cross." But if I come to you saying—yet by no means professing to say *all* that can and ought to be said of the Atonement, but simply bent on bringing it home to you and making it real : "Christ saves men from their sins by shewing that God loves them despite their sins, by shewing them how comely righteousness is, and especially the righteousness which can suffer for the unrighteous ; and hence He took our place, bore our sins, just as you see good men and women suffering for their neighbours' sins and bearing their neighbours' burdens every day :" has not the doctrine of the Atonement come down from heaven to earth, or come back to you from across the sea to which Dogma had banished it ? Do you not feel that by this handle you can grasp it ? that, viewed thus, the key which interprets it is in your own mouth and heart ? Is not the Word that was "without" you now "within" you ? And when once it is thus linked on to your own experience of human life, does it not become a real and solid fact which may be safely left to unfold its deeper meanings, as well as its redeeming energies, within you ?

It would be easy to go the whole round of Christian doctrine, and shew you how each of these doctrines, often so alien and so distant from us, commends itself to us, convincing the reason and persuading the heart, so soon as it becomes a word *within*, so soon as we link it on to our experience and interpret it by facts already

familiar to us. But, that I may not weary you, let me only touch, and touch very slightly, on two or three more of these doctrines, selecting those which seem most abstract and difficult, most remote from, and most difficult to connect with anything in ourselves.

3. Take, for example, *the function and purpose of evil*. Looking outward, the dogmatist on one side of us affirms that all the ills we suffer, whether moral or physical, are but the due result of our sins, the just punishments of an offended God ; while the dogmatist on the other side affirms that the ills of life are so many, and so unjustly apportioned, that it is impossible to believe in the existence and rule of God, unless we admit that He is limited either in goodness or in power. But if we are of those who "look within," we can accept neither the one conclusion nor the other. However perplexed and saddened we may be by the apparent injustice of the human lot, there is that in us which refuses to limit either the power or the goodness of God ; while there is also that in us which refuses to believe that all the ills men suffer can be fairly traced to their personal sins. What says the Word of God ? we ask : and if we look to that Word for ourselves, we soon find that, while it connects suffering with sin, it also connects suffering with perfection. We learn from it that many of the most poignant ills we suffer are designed to correct and enlarge our thoughts, to purge us from our sins rather than to punish us for them, to break the growing chains of habit, to make us more fruitful in every good word and work, to fit and prepare us for an ampler life, a higher service, in ages and worlds to come.

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Now if we take this conception of the function of evil *within*, and test it by our own experience, how soon it gathers substance, vitality, force! For, as we look back, we cannot but remember that much which pained us once, and seemed intolerably evil to us, has proved to be for our good. It has taught us to think more largely and nobly; it has raised us to a higher than our former level of action as well as of thought: it has braced and trained our powers and quickened us to more life and fuller. We see that what it was a pain to bear, it is nevertheless good for us to have borne. With our keenest sufferings well in view, we are able to say, "I would not have been without them." And from the past we argue to the future. What the Word of God which is without us affirms of the great hereafter is no longer distant or wholly incredible to us, because it is in large measure confirmed by the Word within. We can say, "It is very likely," or perhaps even, "It is beyond all doubt, that what we still think evil will prove to have been good for us: in future ages and in worlds to come we shall, or we hope that we shall, be the wiser and the better for all we suffer here and now." And with that future enhancement of life and power and blessedness in view, we are content to suffer whatever God may appoint. Because after we have suffered awhile, and by the things which we have suffered, we are to be settled and established in an everlasting holiness and felicity, we account that these present light afflictions are not worthy to be compared with that eternal weight of glory. And thus, once more, The Word is brought home to us, and becomes true to us.

4. What doctrine can seem more remote from our common experience than *the Divinity of Christ*? It is often handled as though it were in very deed hidden from us in some inaccessible heaven or had been carried across some impassable sea, although St. Paul expressly affirms that Christ Himself is so with us that we need not ascend into heaven to bring Him down, or plunge into the abyss to bring Him back. Very commonly, we seek to prove that Christ is "very God of very God" by citing scriptures which imply or affirm that He is one with the Father; and when our proof-texts are exhausted, we still feel that the doctrine does not so much as touch us, that it awakens no response, breeds no real conviction in us.

Suppose for once, then, that we take another course, and pass from the region of polemics to that of experience. Suppose that, instead of beginning at the further end of the chain, we take hold of it by its nearer end. Let us begin by saying, "Christ was a man," which no one will deny, instead of saying, "Christ was God," which many question, and then see, as we study his history, whether we can keep Him a man. We know little, or little that can be produced in argument, of God; but we do or may know what a man is, and what he can become and do. And if we start by placing Christ under the conditions of humanity, and are content to affirm simply that He was man, we shall find, I verily believe, no way of proving his Divinity so effective as this. For He constantly rises above the highest level of manhood. In his wisdom, his freedom from sin, his righteousness, his meekness, his love for man, his devotion

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to the will of God, He perpetually transcends the loftiest standard of humanity. We cannot keep Him under it, do what we will. We are never so sure that He is truly divine as when we try to conceive of Him as purely human. We look for Him *within*, and we find Him a man such as we are ; but we also find that He is infinitely more and better than we are, and that He is doing a work in and for us which no mere man, which no one short of God Himself, could possibly do : so that we are compelled to fall at his feet and cry, " My Lord, and my God."

6. Finally, take all that is *supernatural* in the universe and in the Bible, all therefore which some hold to be incredible, because opposed to the discoveries and conclusions of Reason, and mark how even this becomes credible and true to us so soon as we interrogate the Word within, so soon as we bring it to the test of our own experience. How often, how constantly, have we been told to conceive of the supernatural as altogether distinct from and opposed to the natural,—high above it as the heavens above the earth, remote from it as the world beyond the sea ! How often have we been taught to conceive of it as hovering over the narratives of Scripture and flashing through them in apparitions, in prodigies, unlike aught with which we are familiar ! How often and constantly have we been taught to believe in supernatural events as having happened long ago, in the centuries which received the original disclosures of the will of God, but which, were they to happen now, would be irregular, incredible, infractions of order and law !

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But no sooner do we ask, “What is natural, and what supernatural?” than we are told that the natural includes the whole universe in so far as we can trace an orderly sequence between cause and effect; and that whatever is outside of this vast series of sequences, if anything be outside it, may fitly be called supernatural. This is not my definition—not, therefore, a definition craftily adapted to my argument; but that of Science itself. Speaking by the lips of its foremost disciples, it affirms that the natural world is the world of antecedents and consequences, in which effects may be traced to their causes; and that the supernatural world, if there be one, is that in which effects cannot be traced to known and adequate causes. We accept the definition; and, accepting it, we affirm that by its very terms *life* and *mind* are supernatural, since neither life nor mind has been, or is likely to be, traced to its cause in the purely physical or natural world.

So that we ourselves, strange to say, are ourselves supernatural beings, who can interfere with the orderly sequences of nature, controlling and modifying them at our will. Every impulse of my life, every determination of my will, in so far as it takes effect in the natural world, is an interruption of the course of nature, and sets it moving on other tracks, to other ends, than it would have pursued had not I put forth my hand upon it. And if we, in our inmost essence, in our life, mind, will, are supernatural, and can arrest and turn the wheels of nature, with what face can we deny that God, the Source and Fountain of life, the Lord and Father of our

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spirits, has a power over them equal to and beyond our own, and may act in a way, which, though natural to Him, would be supernatural to us? Approached thus, from that which is above nature in ourselves, we get a place for that which is supernatural in the Bible, and see how reasonable it is that it should be there. It is no longer remote, unnatural, incredible to us; it comes close home to us and proves itself.

Now in all that I have said, I have been trying to give you *a method* for inducing conviction, or for strengthening wavering convictions, in your own or in other minds, which you may apply for yourselves to the whole round of religious truth or doctrine. *Look within.* Mark where the doctrine touches your personal experience, where it touches or comes closest to you. Begin there, and work your way onward. And if there be any doctrine as high as heaven above your present range, or as far away as though some boundless sea rolled between, you will nevertheless be able to climb that heaven and bring it down, or to cross that sea and bring it home. The method is worth trying; for it not only makes truth reasonable, it also makes it effective. For when the Word of God begins to speak within us, and takes the forms of our own consciousness and experience, we can hardly fail to listen to it and to respond to its claim upon us.

## XXVII.

### *REST.*

“ And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made ; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it ; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made.”—GENESIS ii. 1-3.

“ Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever ; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”—EXODUS xxxi. 16, 17.

WHATEVER our theory of the Mosaic creation of the world may be, whether we judge it to be a literal narrative, or a sublime parable, or a concise and portable summary of the best conception of the origin of all things which the world’s grey fathers could frame, we shall all admit, I suppose, that when Moses tells us how God, having made the heavens and the earth in six days, “ rested from all his work,” the words have some reasonable significance, and convey some thought which it will be well for us to make our own. Whatever it may be, it is no passing thought with Moses ; it recurs

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again and again in his writings : nor does he scruple to say that on the seventh day the Lord not only "rested," but was also "*refreshed*."

What, then, was the thought which Moses had in his mind when he used such words as these ? It is not easy for us to answer that question unless we are of a wise and simple heart. And, on the other hand, it is very easy to persuade ourselves that the words mean little or nothing. We may say, for instance : "When the Lord Jesus was charged with violating the sabbath, by healing a sick man on that sacred day, He rebutted the charge with, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work ;' *i.e.*, He affirmed that because his Father worked on the sabbath, it could not be wrong for Him to work on it." "The Lord's words," we may argue, "stand to reason. For how should the universe be sustained if the creative energy of God were withdrawn from it ? If He *had* ceased to work on sabbaths, then, on the very first sabbath that dawned, the whole universe would have rushed violently to destruction. To keep the world going is as hard as to make it go : how, then, since the world is still going, could God have ever 'ceased from all his work' ?" That sounds very conclusive, very formidable, does it not ? As we listen to it, we are tempted to think that Moses must have been mistaken ; that his words, if they convey any idea at all, must convey a false idea.

Before we yield to that temptation, however, let us look at the question from another and a much simpler point of view. I am strongly persuaded that we owe

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most of our wrong thoughts of God, most of our difficulty in apprehending and receiving what the Bible says about Him, to the fact that we do not dare to think boldly and yet simply enough about Him ; that we are for ever trying to separate Him from ourselves, and to conceive of Him as altogether unlike ourselves, although He Himself has told us that we are made after his similitude, in his likeness, and even only "a little lower than God." If we venture to think of Him as plainly and simply as He speaks of Himself, we shall have no difficulty in understanding what Moses meant in saying that, when his work was finished, God rested from his work and was refreshed.

If we are made in the likeness of God, then, surely, our rest must resemble his rest. Begin here, then, at the bottom of the scale instead of the top,<sup>1</sup> and let us ask what a man's rest really is ; what are its most common and simple forms.

Briefly put, I think we may say that they are two : first, rest *from* work ; and, second, rest *in* work : and that of these two the second is far more valuable and refreshing than the first.

To bring the thought home to our experience, let every man take his own case. We all work. Some have to keep the house, and cook the food, and ply the needle ; others, to make boots and shoes, tables and chairs, lace or hose ; and still others, to devise plans, draw up deeds, prescribe medicine, write sermons or books. It does not matter, so far at least as my argu-

<sup>1</sup> See on *The Word Within*, pp. 350-365.

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ment is concerned, what form your labour takes, so that you really have to work with brain and hand. When the work has been hard, you are glad to leave off. Merely to cease from your labour, to stretch yourselves, to take a meal or a walk, to have a little chat or a little sleep, does you good. It rests and refreshes you. If you are in health, and do not give way to lazy moods, you go back fresh and eager to your task, and do it all the better because for a time you have left off doing it. This is rest *from* work, a most true and refreshing rest.

But there is a better rest than this; and with this better rest you are also familiar. When you have a work in hand which tasks invention or strength, the strain on your energies is very rapid and exhausting ; as when, for example, you have to cut and contrive how to make a little go a long way ; to make your home look attractive with little furniture or a scanty purse ; or when you have to turn out a delicate and beautiful specimen of your handicraft ; or when you have to invent a new pattern or to get it into the market ; or when you have to design an elaborate decoration or a large and complex structure ; or when you have to plead an important cause, to prescribe for a difficult case, or to write on a profound and laborious theme. All this, I say, is very trying ; it rapidly exhausts the nervous energies : and when the task is achieved, you are glad to rest from your toil. But is mere cessation from toil our best and most welcome refreshment, our truest rest ? Not at all. To see our work done, and well done ; to search into it and find no flaw ; to feel that it comes up to that conception, that

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ideal, of it which we had framed in our minds,—this, when we get it (which is not often, I fear), gives us a far more perfect and restful satisfaction than merely sitting still or lying still. When the servant looks round her kitchen and sees everything bright and orderly ; when the wife and mistress goes over the house on which she has spent little money but much thought and labour, and finds that, despite her scanty means, it really looks very cosy and pretty ; when the mechanic has his finished work before him, and acknowledges to himself that it is about as good as he can make it ; when the manufacturer finds his new pattern work out well and sees his warehouse filling with “pieces” for which there is a growing demand ; when the author, as he revises his “proofs,” feels that he has been in his happiest vein and cherishes the hope that his book will win appreciation and do good : they experience a pleasure well nigh as pure and keen as it is given to man to know ; they enter into the peace of a satisfaction far more invigorating and refreshing than that of sitting with folded hands or of lying on a couch. This is rest *in* our work, as distinguished from rest *from* our work ; and the one feeling is immeasurably higher than the other.

Now, because it is important that we should have an exact thought in our minds, let us take an illustration or two more remote from our experience, and in which there will be no appeal to personal feeling. Here, then, is a great painter happily at work on a great subject. The picture daily grows beneath his skilful hand. You can easily understand that every night, as he leaves it, if he

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has done a good day's work, he has a certain satisfaction in the work of the day, and is glad to refresh himself and gather new strength for the morrow. You can easily understand, too, that this rest is often fretted and marred by fear of accident or failure in the work yet to be done, by an intense craving to see the conception he has in his mind fairly and triumphantly wrought out upon the canvas. And you can easily understand that all previous rest and satisfaction are as nothing to the joy which flows into his heart when he sees his picture finished, and all the fair forms conceived in his brain transferred to the canvas without flaw or defect. It is not often, indeed, that consummate artists are satisfied with their work, that they can pronounce it "very good"; but when they are, and can, they touch their happiest moment, and enter into a rest so vital and intense that they think of it only as a joy.

Here, again, is a great musician. He has a noble theme, and treats it nobly. All his genius and passion find expression in that mystic music, audible only to himself, which plays within his brain. As rapidly as he may he transfers this inward music to the sheets before him. Night by night, if he has made good progress, he is happy in his work; happy also to rest from it, that he may recover strength for further labour. At last the work is finished. A competent orchestra is to perform it before a large audience. He hears his thoughts perfectly rendered. He feels the mounting enthusiasm of listening thousands. He is conscious that he has softened, purified, elevated, and won their hearts. Is not *that* a perfect moment to him? When "the end crowns

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the work," and the work is confessed to be an artistic triumph, does he not rest *in* it with a satisfaction, and a freedom from feverish apprehensions and cravings and excitements, which infinitely surpass the satisfactions of rest *from* work? Brain and nerve and heart were never so excited as in this moment; but they are happily excited; they are satisfied: he enters into rest and peace.

And, now, recall the point from which we started, that if man is made in the image of God, God's rest will resemble his. Man's rest is twofold: rest from labour, and rest in labour. Which of these forms of rest are we to ascribe to God? We must give the best to the Best. We cannot say that He rests *from* his toils; for were He to withhold his creative energies even for an instant, the whole universe would sink into darkness and destruction. Quite as calmly and as certainly as the Lord Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," we may affirm, "Even to this day our Father has never ceased from his work." Cessation from activity is not the rest of God. He is the Almighty: and how should the Almighty grow weary? If the rest of God resemble the rest of man, it must be a rest *in* his labours, an ineffable satisfaction and delight in his works, the joy of seeing his Divine conceptions perfectly wrought out, his ideals embodied in perfect forms. He must "take pleasure in the work of his hands;" such pleasure as men feel when they have nobly accomplished a noble task, and have seen their inmost thoughts take their true shape in the outward world of fact.

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Have we any reason to believe that this was the sense in which Moses attributed rest to the Almighty, " who fainteth not, neither is weary " ? We have many reasons, of which I will select only two.

Take, first, the two first chapters in Genesis. God is making a world—so these Chapters suggest—expressing his thoughts in terms of matter, giving form to his conceptions, incarnating his ideals. The work proceeds happily. Day by day He sees that the work of the day is good. " And God saw that it was good " is the familiar refrain appended to the story of each day's toil. At last the week comes to an end ; and, with the week, the work. And now God surveys all that his hands have wrought—the heaven and the earth, land and sea, day and night ; sun, moon, and stars ; fish, birds, beasts ; man and woman. As He surveys them, He " rejoices " in his finished work, and pronounces them not " good " only, but " very good." They answer to his thought. They *are* his thought in varied and beautiful forms. He takes delight in them, and blesses them. This is his picture ; and it is a finished and triumphant work of art. This is his music ; and it is perfect music perfectly rendered. This is his poem ; and it is without a flaw. He rests in it and is refreshed.

Take, again, this thirty-first chapter of the Book of Exodus. Moses is describing the construction of the Tabernacle. He says that Jehovah called Bezaleel and all the wise-hearted of Israel, women as well as men, to make the sacred tent and the furniture thereof. To the end that the work might be choice and beautiful, we are

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told that, God had filled them with his Spirit, given them invention and skill to devise and work in gold and in silver and in brass, in the cutting of stones, in the carving of wood, in the weaving of stuffs, and in all manner of exquisite workmanship. In the same breath, Jehovah speaks of the sabbath as a rest, because on the sabbath He Himself "rested and was refreshed." Why are the two subjects, the work of wise-hearted men and the rest of the only wise God, thus immediately connected with each other? I see no reason save this: That just as gifted men rest in a completed work, so also God, who gives them wisdom and skill, rests and is refreshed when He can rejoice over a finished work as very good. Bezaleel and his wise-hearted friends would often pause from their labours, happy in the conviction that they had done a good day's work, and helped to bring that day nearer on which the whole congregation might come before God in his Sanctuary. But what were all previous satisfactions as compared with the joy of the day when the large beautiful tent, with its rich hangings and golden cords, its carved doors, its brazen altar, its gilded and sculptured ark, was thrown open to the tribes; the day on which, amid the perfumed smoke of many censers and a rolling chorus of praise, "the glory of the Lord came down and filled the tabernacle"? Was not that the true rest for these wise-hearted artists and handi-craftsmen—to see their work perfected, admired of men, approved and hallowed by God? And God's rest, so the Chapter implies, was like that. He, like Bezaleel, had built a temple—a temple with the beautiful and

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many-hued earth for its floor, and for roof the heaven fretted with golden fires ; a temple on which He had lavished a Divine wisdom and power. When He saw the temple complete, and the first worshippers rising to adore Him, his heart grew glad within Him ; He rested and rejoiced in his finished work.

This, I take it, was Moses' conception of the Divine Rest. And, simple as it is, nay, because it is so simple, I believe we shall do well to accept it. To think of God's rest as different from ours is only to put farther from us, to banish to a heaven we can never climb or beyond a sea we can never cross, Him whom we need to know as very nigh to us, even in our hearts and mouths. Our best wisdom is to think of our Father in heaven with the pure simplicity of little children, and to welcome the familiar yet reverent conceptions of Him which the Scriptures suggest.

But if this joy in a completed and beautiful work be the rest of God, it is also the rest which "remaineth" for the sons of men. *The Son of Man* had this rest. Day by day He saw his work making progress under his hand, and took pleasure in it, and was content to rest from it, that He might return to it with new vigour. He never lost this sacred content: but it was not perfect rest. The work still to be done filled and stimulated his mind. His spirit was "straitened" until it was accomplished. He entered into the perfect rest only as He hung on the tree and gave up the ghost. Then, looking back on the work his Father had given Him to do, seeing that nothing had been omitted, that the whole task was com-

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pleted, He cried, "It is *finished!*" and entered into a rest as eternal as it was pure and glad. Just as "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," so the Son of Man reviewed the work of his redemption, and, lo, that also was very good. Just as when "the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them," God rested in his perfect creative work, so the Son of Man rested and was refreshed in the perfect salvation He had wrought, when, by dying for us all, He had atoned and reconciled the world to God.

How, then, may *we* enter into this Divine sabbatism, this pure eternal rest? how possess ourselves of the peace which passeth all understanding? Only as we, too, look back on a work finished and complete. But what work? My brethren, the work has many names. Sometimes we are told that our great task is to "make our calling and election sure;" sometimes, that it is to "work out our own salvation;" sometimes that it is to "believe in God and in Jesus Christ whom he has sent;" sometimes, that it is to become "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect;" and sometimes, that it is to prove our love for the Father whom we have not seen by our love for the brother whom we have seen. But whatever the form it may assume, the work is really one and the same. It is that we become such men as the Son of Man was; in other words, that we become true and perfect men.

To help us in our task, God has taught and aided men from the beginning. First, He wrote the law, by obedience to which we become perfect, on their hearts; that

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is to say, He impressed on the very constitution of our nature the law by obedience to which we live, by disobedience to which we suffer and die. He has so made us that as surely as we are burned by fire or cleansed by water, so surely are we distrusted if we lie, and trusted if we speak the truth ; injured if we do wrong, helped if we respect our neighbour's rights ; hated if we hate, and loved if we love. When men degenerated till this handwriting on the heart grew obscure, if not illegible, so that they often transgressed the law without meaning to transgress it or knowing that they had transgressed it, and suffered for they knew not what, He put his law into definite authoritative enactments, into rules of life, into symbols and rites of worship. He marked out certain actions and classes of action as right, certain other actions and classes of action as wrong. He told men in plain penetrating words what the results of obedience to his will would be, and what of disobedience, and warned them that every sin contained the germ of its own punishment. This was a great help to a true and perfect life ; but not, as the event proved, help enough. The very springs of action had to be cleansed ; motive must be made pure, as well as conduct, and that conduct might be pure. Sins had been committed, and men needed to be persuaded that God loved them despite their sins, that He was prepared to take, that He had taken, them out of the way. And in the fulness of the times He came, in the person of his Son, to make an atonement for our offences, to write his law on our minds and hearts, to carry it down into the mystic

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depths of conscience and affection. He taught us to make the tree good, that the fruit might be good ; to renounce the lust of an impure look, the murder of an angry emotion. And then, because we were weak, and the work was hard, He gave us his strong and holy Spirit to help our infirmities, to cleanse the thoughts and intents of the heart, to lead us into all truth, to inspire and further our endeavours after righteousness.

Through the ages, therefore, God has been seeking to make us perfect, to raise us from selfishness to charity, from impurity to holiness, from weakness to strength ; and thus to help us to "work out our own salvation" and to "make our calling and election sure." Nor has He left off to be gracious. Other means of grace are vouchsafed us. What is our whole experience of life but a manifold lesson on the sacredness of the law written on our hearts and revealed in his Word ? What is the spirit of the time teaching us, what is the lesson it most insists on, but the reign of law, and the merciful inevitableness of the punishments which vindicate it ? What are we here for to-day, if not because we hope to meet God in his house, and to receive from Him new grace answering to our new needs ?

From the beginning God has been setting this mark before us, even our perfection : and from the beginning down to to-day He has been both teaching us in what our perfection consists and helping to make us perfect. *This* is the task He has assigned us ; *this* the work we have to do,—our character has to be "drawn in fairer lines." The discords of heart and life are to be resolved

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into harmony. And not till the picture is complete, not till the music is beaten out, can we enter into the true and perfect rest, the rest of satisfaction and joy in a finished work. Perfect rest is for perfect men.

Now if any of you are of the mind to sigh and say, "That is very true ; perfect rest *is* for perfect men, and therefore it is not for us. It is bad news you bring us, however true it may be, not good news of great joy,"— I reply, Nay, it is not bad news, but good. For, first of all, it is something gained to know where rest is to be found, and how it is to be sought. If you know that you can only have perfect rest when your character is perfected, you have at least an urgent additional motive for trying to mend. Every evil habit renounced, every good habit formed, every advance in holiness and charity and goodwill, brings you nearer to perfection, nearer, therefore, to perfect rest.

And, then, though you must become perfect before you can rise into perfect rest, you may even now have much peace and joy. It is best of all to rejoice in a finished work, as God rejoiced when He had finished his work of creation. But before his work was finished, God took much pleasure in it ; before He could call the whole "very good," He could say that the work of each successive day was "good." So with you. That which is perfect is not yet come. You cannot look back on your whole life, and say that, by the grace of God, it is very good. Nevertheless as day after day draws to a close, you may be able to thank God and say, "To-day has been a good day. I have made some little progress

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with my work, and my heart is more in it than ever." Of course, you will have your fears and apprehensions, and must expect these shadows of imperfection. Your task will often seem hopeless. "It will *never* be finished," you will say ; "I shall never reach my aim, and become what I strive and crave to be." But at other times you will be able to say, "God has done more with me, and for me, than I could have hoped ; and therefore, though I am still far from all perfection, I will put my trust in Him. He will have a desire to the work of his own hands. He will complete that which He has begun : for He wants to rest in me even more than I want to rest in Him."

And this is rest enough till we reach heaven ; rest enough for the week of work-days we have to spend on earth. The days are long ; the work is hard : but the eternal sabbath draws nigh. And when it comes, we shall go up into the House of the Lord for ever, the House not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens, and enter into final, perfect, unbroken, and unending rest.

## XXVIII.

### *THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRSTLINGS.*

“And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb ; and if thou wilt not redeem it, thou shalt break its neck.”—*EXODUS* xiii. 13.

I SELECT this sentence for my text despite the somewhat grotesque impression it may produce on your minds at first, nay, because of that very impression ; for I have found that such quaint sentences as this are like nails which help to drive home the principles they illustrate, to fix and retain them in the memory. And, beyond a doubt, these words illustrate a principle which lies at the very foundation of the religious life in all ages.

When we first read the words with attention, and suffer our imagination to play freely upon them until it calls up the scenes which they suggest, there is, I admit, a savour of cruelty in them, and of cruelty both to man and to beast. What, we are tempted to ask, what has the poor foal done that its neck should be broken, if its owner cannot redeem it with a lamb ? And how should it be a sin if some poor Israelite, too poor either to sacrifice a lamb or to lose the colt of an

ass, should refuse to obey such an ordinance as this, or to believe that it was imposed on him by the God of all mercy and grace? Does not God care for oxen? and for every beast of the stall as well as for the beasts of the field? Has He not shewn, by the mouth of his prophets and psalmists, how much He cares for them? Has He not shewn with what ruth and pity He thinks of the "much cattle" in a doomed city,<sup>1</sup> and of the wild beasts driven from the burning forests of Lebanon?<sup>2</sup> Has He not shewn with what compassionate and perennial bounty He takes thought for their needs, causing grass to grow for cattle as well as herbs for the service of man, sending forth springs in mountain and valley that He may give drink to every beast of the field, that even "the wild asses may quench their thirst;" and opening the sluices of heaven that the very trees of the wood may be satisfied?<sup>3</sup>

And if his tender mercies are over all his works, has He not set man above them all, and put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea? Must He not care for *him* more than for many birds or much cattle? How, then, could the God to whom all his creatures are dear, to whom man is more dear than any other creature, demand a sacrifice which would at once impoverish man and deprive one of his new-born creatures of life?

To this question I might reply that, among the

<sup>1</sup> Jonah iv. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Habakkuk ii. 17 : *comp.* Isaiah xiv. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm civ. 10, 11, 14, 16.

Israelites, a man who owned a she-ass could hardly be a poor man, since, with them, the ass, though the only beast of burden, was reserved for the use of the wealthy and dignified classes. I might remind you that the ass's colt could be redeemed by the sacrifice of a lamb or a kid ; and that, to a pastoral people, this was no very onerous sacrifice, was indeed only such a sacrifice as they were content to make for any traveller of distinction who reached their tent or homestead. I might argue that if it were not cruel of God to devote his birds and beasts to our use, it could hardly be cruel of Him to ordain that we should devote some of them to his service ; and that it does not become those who cheerfully accept this vast and precious gift to grudge any acknowledgment of it which He may demand. I might plead that as God turns to our best use whatever we devote to Him, we possess nothing so truly as that which we bestow on Him, and gain more from that which we lose in his service than from aught else that we call ours.

All this is quite true, and yet I shall not now press it upon you. For I am not concerned to deny—I am not sure that I could honestly deny—the apparent, or even the real, harshness and severity of this ordinance. It is only one of many, only a single example of a vast system of ordinances which touched human life at every point, and demanded that not a tithe merely, but more nearly a third, of all that man possessed should be diverted from its natural use, *i.e.*, the use it would have been natural for him to make of it, to a religious use.

And, doubtless, a system which, in addition to many other burdens, demanded the sacrifice of all firstlings, from the firstfruits of all the various crops brought forth by the prolific earth to the firstborn of every beast of the stalls or the fields, must have pressed severely on the often scanty resources of the chosen people. Even the firstborn son of every family was to be dedicated to the service of God, or redeemed from his service by the payment of five shekels—a sum which many a poor Hebrew must have found it hard to raise.

I do not deny, then, I do not wish to deny, the apparent, or in some sense the real, severity of this ordinance. It is that severity in which our lesson lies, and by which alone the pure and kindly will of God could have been graven on the hard and stubborn heart of a stiffnecked and mutinous race. Do we not know that in no school are the fees so heavy as in the school of experience? and that even in this school no lessons are so costly as those which are taught in the highest form, in the class for Ethics and Religion?

We shall neither vindicate this ordinance to the full, nor be true to the lessons we have ourselves learned in the school of experience, by divesting or seeking to divest it of the air of severity and “awful authority” which it wears. We can only justify it in the deepest and noblest way as we recognize the great fundamental principle it was designed to illustrate, remember that no great moral or spiritual principle can be taught or learned save at a heavy cost, and confess that such a principle

is worth far more to men than it can possibly cost them, that no price is too high to pay for it.

*What* was the principle of this ordinance, then?

Stating it in general terms, we may say that the consecration of the firstlings implied and taught, that all things are the gift of God, and must be used, if we are really to possess and enjoy them, in accordance with his will. Just as the dedication of the first day of the week hallowed the whole week, and made all time sacred; just as the dedication of one house in a city hallowed the whole city, and threw its sanctity over every home; so the dedication of the firstfruits hallowed the whole-harvest, and the dedication of the first birth hallowed the whole family, and implied that the whole round of human life should be holy to the Lord. The moral intention of these ceremonial ordinances was not to purchase exemption from the service of God for the major part of man's life and time, by a special devotion of a fraction of it; it was rather, as St. Paul reminds us, to consecrate all by a special dedication of part: "If the firstfruit is holy, so also is the lump," *i.e.*, the great bulk of the harvest; "and if the root is holy, so also are the branches."

This being the design, the principle, of the Ordinance, was it not worth mastering at any cost of time, or toil, or sacrifice? If men would but learn it; if they would but spend all day every day with God, live with Him in every abode and so transform it into a sanctuary; if they would but recognize the proofs of his love and bounty in all that they acquire or enjoy, use all they

have in his service and do all they do as unto Him,—would they not rise to their true perfection and blessedness? Yet, confessedly, this is the general lesson which the consecration of the firstfruits and the firstborn was intended to teach them, the secret which it was designed to reveal. And hence we may well conclude that it was worth teaching however severely, worth learning at any price.

But the Ordinance had also a more special meaning and intention. In a rough rudimentary form, appropriate to so primitive a time and to a race which had the very elements of religion to learn, it affirmed and embodied the principle which the Lord Jesus afterward detached from its rude framework of outward observance, and expressed in the simple but sublime words: “Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” No pious and thoughtful Israelite could well fail to see, *we* at least cannot fail to see, that what the consecration of all firstlings to the service of God really taught was: “Put the service of God *first*, and keep it first. Hold this aim high above all other aims. Let it rule your whole life in all its provinces and details and ways; for only thus can you rise into the true and perfect life of man.”

And that is a lesson which, despite our manifold advantages over the Jew, we all still need to learn, or to learn more fully. For which of us has yet succeeded in keeping this high spiritual aim always before him, and in subordinating to it all sensuous, selfish, and worldly desires? Which of us does not daily need to repeat the familiar prayer?—

Teach me, my God and King,  
In all things Thee to see ;  
And what I do in anything,  
To do it as for Thee.

We admit the beauty of the principle as a principle. We bow to its authority. We confess that it should dominate our whole life, and that we shall never be at peace until it does. But which of us would dare to say that, because he takes all things as from God, he devotes all to God, living with, and for, Him every day and all day long, in a sacred and strengthening communion of obedience and love ?

And if we ask why we do not live by a principle the truth and authority of which we confess, and keep that service of God in which our true freedom lies and our true blessedness *first* in all we do, surely the answer must be sought in the severity of the demand it makes upon us. Its severity on the Jew we have conceded. But if it made no austerer demand on us than on him, we should hardly complain ; we *might* take his lower place very thankfully. For there are many of us, I am afraid, who are so insensible to our own happiness that we would willingly compound with God ; and if we could meet his claim on us by devoting one day in the week to his service, and one house in the city, and the firstfruits of all our toils and enterprises, and *do what we liked with the rest*, would cheerfully do so much as that for Him. That which irks and yet attracts us, that which makes obedience to his will at once so difficult and so delightful to us, is that his demand on us enters into

the most secret and interior recesses of the heart, and claims to dominate all our thoughts and all our ways, all our aims, purposes, motives, desires, all passions and affections of the soul. No *outward* observance will satisfy it, no outward *sacrifice*, however costly. Nothing will satisfy it but an inward and complete devotion to the will of God, to the righteousness and charity which are the moving forces of that Will. It is not a tax that we have to pay ; it is a love to which we have to respond. Everywhere, and in all things, He meets us with the invitation and command : "Give me thine *heart* ; Give me thine *heart*."

It is this inward, voluntary, and all-commanding affection which we find it so difficult to compel. For to seek God's kingdom and righteousness first, to love and serve Him in all we do, involves a rupture with all the urgencies of sense, with all those selfish and worldly aims which, despite our better will, still retain a strong attraction for us. To some of us, the very thought of submission to another, if also a higher, will than our own is repugnant. To others, the difficulty lies in resisting the desire for present ease and comfort, or for immediate gain. And to others, the effort of thought and volition necessary to the stedfast and untiring pursuit of a single aim, however pure and lofty it may be, is almost beyond their power to maintain. But whatever our difficulty may be, whether it spring from self-will or infirmity of will, from love of ease or love of gain, from a careless, sanguine, self-enjoying nature, or from a mind naturally pensive, unenterprising, unhopeful, the Divine demand,

the Christian law, bates no jot of its inexorable severity. From one and all of us it insists on a pure and whole-hearted devotion to the will of God, insists that this shall be our supreme aim, and that it shall be stedfastly pursued, pursued at the cost of any sacrifice it may entail.

We shall never meet this demand until we are persuaded that the aim is worth the sacrifice, that our chief end is also our chief good. And by "persuaded" I do not mean convinced, and still less convinced against our will. The arguments which carry weight in the Court of Logic are of little use here. Most of us have long since listened to all that can be alleged, and have yielded to their force. Intellectually, we do not doubt that to put God first, or, in other words, to put righteousness and charity first, is the true aim of human life, and the only way in which we can attain our proper perfection and blessedness. And yet, practically, we find it as hard as ever to keep this aim always before us, and to make it supreme. We want so much else than this, so much that is lower; and these lower wants are so pressing and imperative that we often permit them to override our supreme aim, or to jostle it out of sight. We want health, for instance; we want daily work and livelihood: we want position, culture, enjoyment. Are we to sacrifice any or all of these in order to secure a righteous and loving spirit? Is this an aim so high and noble and satisfying that, to reach it, we should sacrifice whatever may stand between it and us?

So long as we move simply in the region of intellectual and ethical speculation, we do not doubt, as I

have said, what the answer to this question should be. We confess that a spirit at peace with itself, with God, with all the world, is worth all else that the world has to offer or that God Himself can bestow. But in practical life our answer is not so easy, distinct, certain. Here we often permit the nearer aim to shut out that which is more distant, the lower aim to overtop the higher ; and thus we strike a discord which vibrates through our whole nature, or prolong a strife which weakens and debases us,—the old discord, the old strife, between flesh and spirit, between the law of our members and the law of our mind.

And that I suppose is why we are so made and our life is so ordered that, as the years pass, we are taught in the most practical and impressive way how unable these lower aims are to satisfy us, and are invited, almost compelled, to seek our own highest good. The chances and changes of mortality, against which we often ignorantly complain, are God's ministers for our welfare ; they are the schoolmasters, the rod, the discipline which press this lesson home upon our hearts. When health fails us, or life draws visibly to a close ; when work fails us, or we can no longer do our work with the old alacrity and enjoyment ; when we lose the position for which we have striven, or win it only to find that it lacks the charm with which we had invested it ; when we seize the pleasure we have pursued and it withers in our grasp, or the very faculty for pleasure decays within us ; when we gain the end we have set before us and our soul remains craving and unsatisfied still,—what is all this but

a schooling by which we are taught that the chief aim of the soul must be a good as vast and as enduring as itself? what is it but a long series of practical proofs by which God feelingly persuades us that He has made us for Himself, and that our hearts can know no rest until they rest in Him?

Ah, my brethren, if we were but quick to take his meaning, if we did but trust his love, we should hear his voice in all the changes, losses, and sorrows of life, saying, "Seek first my kingdom and righteousness; seek your chief good in the sacred and eternal realities in which alone it is to be found." Instead of seeming the messengers of his anger, we should recognize in them the ministers of his mercy. We should feel that He had come out of his place, not to rob or injure or impoverish us, but to hush the discord and compose the strife of our souls, to give us that very power of serving Him and of delighting ourselves in Him for which we often pray.

There has been but one man to whom goodness was natural, in whose spotless righteousness there was no effort, no strain. And if even He was made perfect by suffering, by sacrifice, how else can we hope to be delivered from that bondage to a weak and divided nature into which we have fallen, and to become perfect as He was perfect? And if, for the joy set before Him, He could delight both to do, and to bear, the will of God, and to have the Divine law graven on his very heart, shall we shrink from the discipline by which that law is impressed on our hearts and we are made partakers of his joy and peace?

## XXIX.

### *THE MIND THAT WAS IN CHRIST.*

#### A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being (originally) in the form of God, did not clutch at his equality with God, but emptied himself (of it), taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”—PHILIPPIANS ii. 5-8.

IT is our custom at this season of the year to meditate on the story of the Advent, to let our thoughts linger either on that great birth of time itself or on some of the romantic or pathetic incidents which attended it. The custom is, surely, a reasonable and a seemly one, and yet there is, I think, a still more excellent way, if only we can attain unto it. And we are likely to attain it if, instead of dwelling simply or mainly on the history of that great event, or on any of the incidents which attended it, we endeavour, under some wiser guidance than our own, to penetrate to its inner significance, to “the mind of Christ Jesus” rather than his birth, to the motives which prompted Him to lay aside the glory He had with the Father before the world began, to the

purpose for which He emptied Himself of that glory and took on Him the form of a servant. For *the mind* of Christ cannot but be much more to us than any event in his history, however great. *That* may be the glory of an age ; but *this* is for all time, for all eternity. And I know of no passage which throws a clearer stronger light on the mind of Christ, on the inward significance, on the motive and purpose whether of the Advent or of the Atonement, than the noble and pregnant verses which I have just read to you.

There is much else in them, indeed, both of doctrine and of duty, which we must pass by with no more than a word, or even without a word ; for it is a very full cup which St. Paul here lifts to our lips, and we cannot hope to drain it. The virtue, the grace, of Humility, for instance, was never more splendidly illustrated, or more weightily enforced on those who are tempted to think more, and more highly, of themselves than they ought to think. Nowhere is the doctrine of "the proper deity of Christ" more distinctly and impressively affirmed, and not affirmed only, but assumed and implied in the whole structure of the sentence, and in many of the leading words which it contains. Nor is there anywhere a clearer implication of the heart-moving truth that, in humbling Himself to manhood, to death, to shame, Christ was serving a higher will than his own, and declaring it to be the good pleasure of our Father in heaven that no man should perish, but that all should turn and live.

But precious and weighty as these truths are, we

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should not sound the depths of the Apostle's words, or reach their choicest treasure, were we to rest in these. There are truths in them which are as much more precious as they are more seasonable; truths more potent than the Star which hung over the cradle of the Holy Babe, more sweet than the angelic Song which announced his birth: truths which cast their light full on the very mind of Christ, and teach us in the simplest and most immediate way both *why*, and *for what*, He came down to earth and was found in fashion as a man. It is, then, to the motive of his advent, and to the purpose for which He came, that I am about to ask your attention; and if we are not moved to the love and humility, the charity and devotion, proper to this gracious and hallowed time, the fault must be all our own.

St. Paul emphasizes two distinct movements, or series of movements, in the Divine Mind: (1) that which brought Christ down from heaven to earth, and was consummated at the Advent; and (2) that which impelled Him, after He was in the world, to take the form of a servant and humble Himself to death, which was consummated on the Cross.

First of all, we are carried back, and carried up, to those pre-natal times in which Christ was sitting at the right hand of the Father, clothed in the Father's glory and sharing his power. Even then, though He was one with the Father and wore "the form of God," He was not at rest. So far was He from clutching at his equality with God and striving to retain it, so far was He from delighting Himself in the imperial splendours

of his heavenly state, or grasping at them as a prize which He could not forego, that He rose from his throne, came down from it, and began to strip off crown and robe, to lay aside his sceptre,—to divest Himself of the regalia, to empty Himself of his glory.

This is the first picture or parable which St. Paul displays to our wondering eyes, this the form in which he represents to us that which in itself transcends all form. And if we ask for the motive of this abdication, if we ask, "Why does the Son of God lay aside his kingly state?" the Apostle replies: He is about to become man, to be "made in the likeness of men." If we still ask, "Why?" he tells us plainly elsewhere what he only assumes here, that the Son of God divested Himself of his glory in order that He might invest us with it; that He stooped so low in order that He might raise us to the height from which He stepped down: that He took our human nature upon Him in order that He might make us partakers of his Divine nature and holiness.

So that, in effect, we are taught to conceive of the first humiliation of the Son of God, his humiliation to manhood, as prompted by pure love and pity for men—a love and pity so pure, so potent, as to constrain Him to stoop to their conditions and to share their lot. He wears the form, He is clothed and crowned with the glory, of God; but all this He resigns in order that He may recreate men in the Divine Image they have lost, and raise them to the glory which, for their sakes, He is willing to forego. He is the co-equal of the Lord

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and Maker of the universe ; but, instead of clutching at his equality, He cheerfully strips Himself not only of the splendours of the throne, but also of his authority and blessedness, in order that He may reinstate men on the throne which they had forfeited and put all things under their feet. All *his* glory availed Haman nothing so long as one poor Jew refused to do him honour ; all his glory availed the Son of God nothing so long as one poor sinner was unable to partake it.

This was the mind of Christ before He became man and dwelt among us. And it continued to be his mind after He took our flesh and likeness. As He had emptied Himself of the glory of the Godhead, so also, by a second voluntary humiliation, He emptied Himself of the glory of manhood. Wealth, rank, power, learning, genius, fame, are the qualities and conditions which command for men the admiration of their fellows ; in these lie the splendour of human life. And yet He whose are all things ; He who, even on the human side, had a pedigree so ancient and honourable that it was inscribed in sacred records which were ancient when our English fathers settled on these shores ; He who, if only by his willingness to be the minister of all, and his power to touch the hearts of all, had a claim to rule superior to that of any of the princes of this world ; He to whom *all* things were known, and who spake as never man spake ; He who alone was without sin, and never at any time transgressed any commandment ; He who was so good that the whole world is the better for his brief sojourn in it, and has received from Him a new ideal of goodness ;

He, therefore, who of all men might justly have claimed the most splendid and impressive human conditions, and to be reverenced and loved as Hero, Sage, Ruler, Saint, declined these human glories, as He had divested Himself of the glories of heaven, took on Himself the form of a servant, nay—as St. Paul still more strongly expresses it, the form of *a slave*—refused every advantage which He could not share with the lowliest of the children of men, and humbled Himself to endure whatever is sordid, painful, sad, or terrible in their lot. Do we, any of us, know the sting and temptation of penury and homelessness? He had neither a shekel to pay a tax with, nor a place in which to lay his head. Have we, any of us, blushed under the shame of dependence? He owed bed, and food, and raiment, to a few poor friends who ministered unto Him out of their necessities. Are we oppressed with infirmities and troubled by sorrows for which there seems no remedy? He Himself bare our sorrows, and carried our infirmities. Do we dread death? He humbled Himself to death. Do we dread shame even more than death? He humbled Himself to the cross. Have we felt how sharper than the serpent's tooth or the sting of death itself is ingratitude—the indifference or the hostility of those whom we have loved and served? He came to his own and his own received Him not. He was rejected and despised by those for whom He had laid aside the glories both of heaven and of earth. He was denounced as the Sinner of all time by those for whom He was made sin, that He might take their sin away.

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This was, this is, the mind of Christ, the mind that brought Him down to earth, the mind that animated Him while He was on the earth, the mind which still animates Him now that He has gone back to heaven ; a Mind to which nothing human was alien ; a Mind which, so far from clutching at aught that it possessed, counted nothing its own until all who were capable of receiving had received it ; a Mind that could enjoy nothing unless we could share his joy ; a Mind which can never be satisfied until we are satisfied to the last and finest fibre of our souls ; a Mind which moved Him to divest Himself of every splendour by which we were not irradiated, and to refuse every cup of blessing of which we could not drink ; nay, more, a Mind which constrained Him to invest Himself with every poor and mean and painful condition by which, however justly, we were tried, and to drink of every cup of shame and cursing, however foul and loathsome, which our very transgressions against Him had carried to our lips.

And this Mind, which was in Christ Jesus, is also to be in us, is to dominate all the thoughts, affections, and habits of the soul ! With what a force of tender but piercing reproach does this simple and reasonable injunction come home to us so soon as we reflect what his Mind was and compare it with our own ! Is the mind of Christ the ruling mind even in Christ's Church, and among us who call ourselves by his Name ? Alas, so far from clutching at nothing which would divide us from our brethren, or raise us above them ; so far from counting nothing our own which we cannot share with

them ; so far from humbling ourselves to their level that we may raise them to ours, we are not content to fence ourselves off from them by what we call natural distinctions of position and character and culture, but are for ever inventing and insisting on artificial distinctions by which we may flatter our sense of superiority ; and, worst of all, are even turning the reconciling truths and hopes of our common creed into barriers by which we may separate ourselves from them, or into pedestals on which we may lift ourselves above them, thus converting what we know of the very Mind of Christ into a reason for not sharing and shewing his mind.

No sane man will deny that wealth, at least in moderate degree, as much of it as we can use well, or that pure and honourable birth, or learning, or the refinements of culture, or genius, or virtue, are real and great advantages. They involve immense distinctions as the world goes, and *may* enable us to shew more than we otherwise could of the mind that was in Christ Jesus. Do we not all know men who, without denying themselves any real comfort or solid advantage which wealth can confer, nevertheless accept it as a sacred trust ; and so far from priding themselves on it, or clutching at it as a prize in virtue of which they may erect themselves above their fellows, use it for the benefit, or what they conceive to be the benefit, of their fellows, and are even ashamed to possess so much while many have so little ? Do we not know men of good birth, scholars, statesmen, poets, who scorn base and selfish delights, and live laborious days, in order that they may cultivate the

special gifts bestowed on them, and so employ them for the general good as that the nation, or the world, shall be the better and the wiser, the happier and more free, for them? Do we not know men and women whose goodness is an invitation rather than a rebuke, and to whom the weary, the sinful, and the lost may repair for solace, for guidance, for help? And do not *they* teach us how any good gift, any real advantage, we possess should be employed? Have not *they* the mind of Christ? And may not we have it, if we will?

But if, instead of following the gracious example they set us, we clutch at any of these good gifts and grudge that others should share them with us; if no man is the richer for our wealth, no man the wiser for what we know, no man the better for our virtue, no man the happier for our happiness; if we pride ourselves on whatever makes us to differ from our fellows, forgetting Who has made us to differ and for what end; if, instead of labouring to raise them to the level of privilege on which we stand, and to make them partakers of any grace that we possess, we try to keep them down lest we should lose our advantage over them,—how dwelleth the mind of Christ in us?

Yet even these natural, and in some sense real, advantages are not the only barriers between class and class, not the only prizes on which men plume themselves and cherish a complacent sense of superiority. Even in the Church of Christ, no less than in the world at large, there are those who invent or adopt the most arbitrary and fantastic distinctions on which to nourish their

pride of place or condition. Professional men thank God that they are not in trade, although many men in trade are just as well-bred and well-educated as they are ; county looks down on town, wholesale on retail, the manufacturer on the shopkeeper, the shopkeeper on the shopman, the clerk on the artisan, the artisan on the labourer, the labourer on the pauper, the "young lady" on the "young person" who makes her dress, the dress-maker on the servant-girl, the servant on the maid-of-all-work, the maid-of-all-work on the charwoman, while even the common hangman prides himself, and is deferred to, for the loathsome notoriety of his office. In short, there is no vocation, no station, no feature of the face or the body—and I have actually known a man who was proud of his finger nails, just as Thackeray knew a man who "absolutely perished of his forehead"—there is no peculiarity of function, or even of attire, on which some poor foolish child of God will not hug himself, and lay the flattering unction to his soul that in some way he is distinguished from and elevated above the rest. Instead of breaking through all barriers that we may shew ourselves the servants and friends of all, we are for ever erecting fresh barriers between ourselves and our fellows out of trifles light as air and insubstantial as a dream. How, then, dwelleth the mind of *Christ* in us, who, when He was in the form of God, emptied Himself of the glory of the Godhead, who, when He was in the form of man, emptied Himself of all that is counted glorious by men, that there might be absolutely no barrier between Himself and the most lowly and sinful of the human race?

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The last and most dreadful refinement of the evil and dividing self-conceit to which we are all prone, and which it becomes us to consider and renounce, is to be found *only* in the Church, and consists, as I have said, in turning the Mind of Christ against itself. To Him we owe the truths we believe, the hopes we cherish, the graces we possess, and all those sacraments of life and worship by which our inward life is fed. If, then, we turn *these* into barriers by which we are separated from our neighbours, or into distinctions by which we are raised above them, what less are we guilty of than using Him, who came to unite us all, to aggravate the very divisions and strifes He came to compose? If, because we hold the truth as it is in Jesus in certain forms, we look down on all who hold it in other forms; if, because we observe certain modes of worship, we despise or condemn all who do not observe them; if, because we have been brought to the knowledge of the truth, or have felt the transforming power of the Divine grace, we deem that we are wiser and better than our fellows in any sense which does not bind us to labour to impart that grace and truth to them; if we have received any gift which we are not eager to communicate, and have not learned that no gift becomes truly our own until we have communicated it to others: and, most of all, if we pride ourselves on being of the *few* who shall be saved, thank God that we are not as other men, but belong to an elect caste, a superior order; if we cherish a hope for ourselves which we would not willingly share with the whole world; if we hold that our security or our happi-

ness hereafter can be enhanced by the conviction that most, or any, of our fellows will be condemned to an everlasting shame and misery,—why, then, we commit the last sin and offer the last insult to the Mind that was in Christ Jesus. We are changing the very truth into a lie, resisting the very spirit of Christ in the name of Christ, and turning the bond of brotherhood into a barrier which excludes “men, our brothers,” from our fellowship, our service, our love. No safety, no splendour, no glory, whether of earth or of heaven, could keep Him from the side of any of the sons of men. All these He laid aside that He might become one with us, one with every one of us, that He might share our lot, that He might share his life and lot with us.

*Let the mind that was in Him be also in you. It is even now striving to enter into, to possess and animate, you. Every emotion of friendship, of love, of charity which stirs within you at this hallowed season, every feeling of benevolence and compassion which prompts you to minister to the wants of the poor, the hungry, the sick, is but an avenue by which He is seeking to approach you, or to maintain and enlarge his dominion within you. Yield to Him. Let his mind abide in you, and you will suffer no distinction of wealth or rank, culture or condition, to separate you from any one of your brethren. You will learn so to use your several gifts in his service and that of your neighbours, that they will become at once more fully your own, and his, and theirs.*

XXX.

*THE MORAL OF CHANGE.*

A NEW YEAR SERMON.

“The fashion of this world passeth away.”—I CORINTHIANS vii. 31.

NO doubt the world itself will pass away. For that we have the warrant of Scripture, and Science has countersigned the warrant. But this warrant is not to be found here. St. Paul is not predicting a future catastrophe ; he is announcing a present fact. He does not affirm that “the cloud-capp’d towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples” of this familiar world, yea, the solid globe itself, with all who inherit it, shall dissolve, and like the baseless fabric of a vision, like an insubstantial pageant faded, “leave not a rack behind.” He affirms a fact with which we are more immediately concerned, *viz.*, that *the fashion*, the form, the whole outward aspect, of the world in which we live fades, changes, passes, while we look upon it ; that it is now, and always, passing away : and from this fact he infers the immense importance of fixing our affections and placing our aims, not on the outward show, the frail and shifting form of things, but

on the sacred and enduring realities which lie beneath and behind them.

The affirmation is one, therefore, which every man may test and appreciate for himself. And, surely, no sane man will doubt or question it for a moment. For have we not *seen* the fashion, the whole outward form and aspect, of the world change and pass even in the few years in which we have lived in it? The very physical configuration of the world has largely changed since we were born into it. Forty or fifty years ago neither London (in which I was born) nor Nottingham (in which most of you were born) was half, nor even a quarter, of its present size: sheep and cattle fed in green fields which are now covered with a wilderness of houses. There were no steamships in our docks, no railways running from city to city and from shore to shore, no gas in our lamps, no police in our streets, no penny post, no telegraph or telephone. Changes like those which we have witnessed have taken place throughout the land; similar changes have passed over the whole face of Europe: while in America the steps of change have been still more marked and rapid.

Nor has the sweep of change been confined to the physical world and the physical conditions of human life. Changes just as marked have taken place in the social world. Our manners and customs have grown much less severe and formal, as also much less coarse and brutal, since the time when prize-fighting was held to be an honourable profession, and seduction was deemed a manly pastime, and drunkenness a gentle-

manly vice, and even a genial and courtly statesman like Lord Melbourne could "never speak without swearing." What changes have taken place in the world of business, in which, for instance, land, from the best and surest investment, has become the worst and least remunerative ; in the political world, in which government by classes was the established order, and even by a few ruling families whose main preoccupation used to be dynastic wars and what they called "the balance of power" ; or in the literary, scientific, and artistic worlds, it would take too long to tell. But, I believe, I am only using what as many of you as are competent to judge will acknowledge to be the words of soberness and truth if I say, that, even during this brief period, we have seen an entire revolution in each one of these worlds ; that more than once, even in our time, its fashion has passed away.

Now this fact, that we live in a perpetual flux of change, in a complex world, or series of worlds, whose form is for ever passing away, has always been thought an impressive and pathetic fact. To many, indeed, it is charged with melancholy ; and though they cannot quite put it out of their minds at this season of the year—for it comes to us naturally and unbidden at the close and the opening of every considerable period of time—they like to get it out of their minds as quickly as they can, since it offers them food for none but pensive meditation. It may be, therefore, that some of you feel that I have chosen a wofully inappropriate theme for the opening day and Sunday of the year, on which none but words of good omen should be spoken ; on which, whatever pen-

sive reflections and dreary forebodings may be brooding in your hearts, you naturally look to the pulpit for incentives to cheerfulness and courage and hope. But what joy is like that of having our sorrow turned into joy? What can move us to "put a cheerful courage on," if not the wonder and delight of seeing that the very shadows of human life, like those of the physical world, are full of colour and light? If this rolling mist of Change in which we are involved, and by which our spirits are beclouded and depressed, breaks and parts only to shew us a fairer, ampler, and more stable world *within*, to which we are being led, or in which we may even now find a home and refuge for the soul,—shall we any longer mourn that "the fashion of this world passeth away"? If the fact which seems most fully charged with melancholy, so soon as we steadily regard it, opens, and unfolds before us paths of peace, and gates through which we may pass on into an unchanging security and joy, what fact can be more welcome to us than this, or more appropriate to the time?

Nothing less than this is the truth which St. Paul has to teach us, if at least we take his words in the spirit, and not in the letter, and paraphrase them to meet our modern conceptions and needs. Virtually, he says to us: "Many of the relations in which you stand to the world alter, for the whole complex form of the world—physical, social, commercial, political—is ever in flux. But even these outward changes are often improvements; and they come, not only that the outward fashion of the world may be bettered, but also to warn you not to

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anchor your heart on that which changes, not to set your prime affections on it, not to lay up your real treasure in it : but to set your affections and stay your heart, and lay up treasure, on and in that which does not change—in truth, in righteousness, in goodness, in love. *These* are the same in all worlds, abide unchanged under all changes, and are as enduring as the soul itself. If, then, you are seeking a home for the soul, find it here. Let the changes in the outward show of things lead you to this inward and abiding rest. Use the world, indeed, though it be full of change ; but let its very changes teach you its true use ; for its true and highest use is to convince you that it cannot satisfy 'the vast desires of the soul,' and to conduct you to that which can. True rest is not to be found in the shifting phenomena and passing shows of time, but in the eternal realities which they variously body forth. Do not seek rest, then, in a wealth which has wings, in pleasures which sate but do not satisfy, in brilliant attainments or achievements as frail, if as bright, as bubbles on the stream. But seek it within the soul itself—in so using all that the world offers you, all its labour, wealth, science, art, as that you may grow in wisdom, in justice, in purity and kindness and charity, in fellowship with God and serviceableness to man. For these are qualities and possessions over which death and change have no power. By securing these, you secure *all*, and secure *all for ever*."

Truth, righteousness, goodness, love,—these, then, and such as these, are the only permanent treasures ; for they may be carried within the soul, and so are not subject to

that law of change which rules all that is without us : they are indeed of the very substance of which the soul is made, the very food on which it is nourished, and partake therefore of its own immortal quality.

And where, amid the endless mutations of time, are these sole permanents of the spirit which is within man to be found ?

They are to be found, and shewn, in all the worlds to which I have referred ; for much that is true, much that is right, much that is wise, good, generous, kind, may be found in the social customs of men, in their political institutions and activities, in the labours by which the race is clothed and fed, in the researches and discoveries of science, in the methods and achievements of art : and in each one of these spheres, or worlds, we may so carry ourselves as to exercise ourselves in and cultivate the high moral qualities in which alone our chief good consists and our supreme treasure.

But when these noble and enduring qualities are in question, our thoughts naturally revert to a world of which as yet I have not spoken. The world of Religion, or, as we sometimes call it, "the Christian world," is, at least for us, the main region and native home of truth, righteousness, charity, of all that constitutes our enduring, because our spiritual, wealth. It is from this sacred centre and mystic fountain of our being that we derive the moral energies which we exhibit in every other world in which we dwell, in every other department of our life.

Is it true, then, and true even of *this* world, that its fashion, its outward form and scheme, passeth away ?

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Does religion itself, which surely ought to be the one stable element and region of life, come under the law of Change?

It is so true that the inmost secret of the unrest which perturbs many of our hearts is simply this: that, within the last twenty or thirty years, our whole way of looking at Religion has changed; that many of what we once held to be its leading doctrines, or verities, have become questionable to us, or even wholly incredible. Changes in those other worlds—in methods of business, of government, of social intercourse, and in the scientific or artistic appreciations of nature and of human life—would have produced but a comparatively slight effect upon us, were it not that *here*, in the very centre and home of our being, the solid-seeming ground has begun to quake beneath our feet, the very pillars of the temple, hallowed by the worship of our fathers, have begun to rock, and we have been driven to the conviction that we must either renounce our faith, or commence the long toil and agony of rearing a new and larger home for the Spirit. Much that we held to be true—as, for example, the infallibility of Scripture, the heavenliness of the earthen vessels as well as of the treasure they contain—has come to be dubious or untrue to us. Much that we held to be righteous—as, for example, the eternal damnation of the majority of the human race—seems to be unrighteous to us. Much that we held to be good and kind—as, for example, the election of a select few to an everlasting but selfish bliss—is now *not* good, *unkind*, and therefore impossible. Nowhere has it been more deeply or con-

spicuously true than in the religious world, that the fashion of this world passeth away. Nowhere has the sweep of change been wider or more profound ; and nowhere are the hearts of men at this moment more perplexed with *fear* of change.

Most of you have, I suppose, felt even this solid ground "give" beneath your feet ; and even if you have recovered your faith in the truths of religion, and hold them all the more firmly because the very shock compelled you to frame larger and less inadequate conceptions of those truths, you may nevertheless fear what the effects of strife and change may be on the minds and hearts and lives of the young and inexperienced. You may fear, some of you, I know, do fear, lest they should be shaken from the faith in which alone, as you believe, they can find strength and peace.

And what can I say to sustain you under this fear, or to banish it from your thoughts ?

I can at least ask you to bear in mind St. Paul's general principle, that the very office of Change is to lead men, through that which is mutable and perishable, to that which is enduring and permanent. I can at least beg you to remember that the effects of change in all the other worlds to which I have referred have been good in the main ; that, in the social, business, political, and scientific worlds, despite some serious drawbacks, change has, on the whole, been the servant of improvement. And, surely, I may leave you to infer for yourselves, (1) that St. Paul's principle will hold good in religion as in all things else ; that, since men are after all governed by

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God, they will be led through their imperfect and fluctuating conceptions of truth to larger and more enduring conceptions: and (2) that what experience has taught us to be the final result of change will not fail us here, but that, as in all other worlds, so in this, change will prove to be the minister of improvement.

In this connection Mr. Lynch's homely illustration often recurs to one's mind. "Christianity," I once heard him say, "is just now moving to a larger house; and everybody knows how confusing and laborious a move is, and what dust, trouble, and irritation it may occasion. Many things that would do in our old house must be broken up or burnt up, if they cannot be brightened up, now that we are going to a new one. We must give the house a home look indeed, but we shall certainly want some new things. We are removing, for one reason, *because we want to live in a house large enough for our hospitality*. Space and fresh convenience will soon make us forget our trouble of moving. But let those who would move to a larger house for comfort's and for hospitality's sake—or who are *looking out* for a house, not having yet found one to their mind—remember that to live *sub die* (in the open air) in this inclement world, and especially with your goods and family around you, is not wise, nay, health and service considered, is not possible."

To you younger people, then, on whom the changes of religious forms of thought have not yet produced their proper or their full effect, inasmuch as they have not yet led you to improved conceptions of religious

truth ; to all who have been born to the discomfort, toil, and unrest of a time in which Religion is moving to a larger house, and who have not yet found, or are not quite sure that they have found, a more liberal, hospitable, and durable home for the soul, let me, in conclusion, offer a few words of friendly counsel and advice.

And, first of all, Have no fear of change. No man was ever yet led into larger and happier conceptions of truth than he once entertained, save by a strife of thought with thought and under a pressure of change which, for the time being and till he saw the issue of the strife, he felt to be most painful and perplexing.

On the other hand, Do not cherish the love of change. If you must move into a larger house, that is no reason why you should break up your home, or fling into the street all the heirlooms and acquisitions which connect you with the past and speak to you of bygone sorrows and joys.

That which is most venerable and dear to you, or which should be most dear and venerable, is beyond the reach of change ; it is not for an age, but for all time. Your chief treasures are not any personal peculiarities of opinion, or any scraps of a sectarian creed which you have inherited, but the truths most commonly and most surely believed by the catholic Church throughout all the world.

Some of the most precious of these truths, moreover, are not even peculiar to the Christian Faith, though that Faith has brought them home to us with a force and a tenderness unknown whether to the ancient world or to

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the non-Christian world of modern times. Look through the shows of things and the differences of human thought and condition and time, and you will find that the best men of every age and faith, heathen or Jewish or Christian, Unitarian or Trinitarian, Dissenter or Churchman, Protestant or Romanist, have at bottom held very much the same creed and walked by much the same rule of life. They have all put their trust in a God whom they believed to be just and good ; they have all felt and confessed their sins against his law, and hoped that He would forgive their sins and help them to a better life. They have all aimed at walking after the spirit rather than after the flesh, and felt that men reached their true end and blessedness only as they loved truth and righteousness and charity more than wealth, or pleasure, or self-indulgence.

This, I say, is a creed and a morality common to the good of every faith, of every age, of every race. They seem to be congenital to the human mind. No change in social or political life, vast as these changes have been, no coming in of a new and better faith, has touched or shaken them ; and even the agnostics and atheists of the present day, who reject the creed, hold fast to the morality, and teach as earnestly as we do that men should live in and for the things which are unseen and eternal, and not for the things which are seen and temporal.

Probably there is no one of you who does not hold both the common creed of the race and its common morality, though happily there are many of you who

both hold more, and hold so much on surer grounds and higher sanctions than do some of your neighbours. And I am bold to say that if you hold only so much as this, you have a good working outfit with which to start on the religious life ; and that, if you are true to it, you will not only be acceptable to God and man, but will infallibly be led on from it to a creed and a morality more rich and full.

Many of you, however, have long since passed this early and rudimentary stage of the religious life. You have been suckled on the Bible, and bred amid the charities of the Christian Church and home. And *your* concern is that much which the Bible teaches, or which you think it teaches, has grown doubtful to you, and that the Church demands, or you take it to demand, much which you are not prepared to yield. Your very cradle-faiths have been disturbed, though you are far from willing to give them up. What am I to say to you ?

I have this to say to you. Forget for a moment what you doubt, and reckon up how much you still honestly believe. *This* at least you find in the Bible, that it confirms, that it enforces with new and pathetic sanctions what I have called the common creed and the common morality of all good men. And these, as we have seen, form of themselves a sufficient basis and outfit for the religious life. But the Bible not only shews us that there is a temper and a tone in all true worshippers of God which is the same in every age, and which we should therefore cherish. It also teaches us

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to find God everywhere and in everything. "God is in the Bible as the sun is in the sky. Its very clouds glorify Him, the gloom having a peculiar awe because it hides *Him*." Throughout it lays heavy stress on the fact which all good men acknowledge, that they have sinned against their own peace in sinning against his law, and on the hope they indulge that, if they confess and renounce their sins, He will blot out all their transgressions. And, throughout, it incites us, by the most cogent demonstrations of the vanity which cleaves to things of time and sense, to raise our affections to the unseen and eternal realities of the spirit. But the great impression which the Bible makes on all who in any sense receive it as the Word of God and read it with an open mind is, I suppose, that, on the authority of God Himself, it reveals Him as the Father and the Saviour of mankind—not of a few, elected by caprice or selected for their fitness, but of the whole human race. In the New Testament this amazing revelation of the fatherly and redeeming love of God culminates in the person and work of Christ; and we are taught, by one supreme illustration, that God's will is our salvation from evil in every form of it, and that all the sorrows and wrongs of time are but a discipline by which that salvation is to be wrought out.

This is the great, central, and all-pervading truth of the Bible, the truth in the faith of which you have been bred. I do not deny that there is much in the Bible that may be doubtful to you, much which as yet you cannot receive. And on whatever points are doubtful

or difficult to you, I would earnestly counsel you to hold your judgment in suspense. If men come to you in the name of God or of Christ, and imperatively claim that you should believe in dogmas or mysteries in which as yet you cannot honestly believe: if, for example, they bid you believe that you "deserve to be burned in hell for ever," and that it is boundlessly good of God, who made you so that you cannot help being a sinner, to give you the slightest chance of escaping damnation; or if they bid you believe that you cannot be saved apart from a grace which God could give you if He pleased, but does not or may not please to give you; or if they bid you believe that your salvation is secured if only you hold a certain creed and observe certain sacraments: do you, in your turn, bid them stand aside; *they* cannot be wiser than all the good men of every age, and these have never affirmed that faith in such dogmas and mysteries are necessary to salvation. And, on the other hand, if men come to you, and imperiously require, in the name of Science or in the name of Philosophy, that you should disbelieve in miracles or dogmas, as clearly opposed to human reason and experience, bid them also stand aside; as you may do with perfect modesty if only you remember that Charles Kingsley knew as much of science, and Faraday and Clerk Maxwell a good deal more, than any agnostic *you* are likely to meet, while yet they firmly believed in the dogmas and miracles which you are asked to reject; and that Maurice and Coleridge were far more familiar with logic and philosophy than any dabbler in them who will come

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in your way. *This* may not be the time, so far as you are concerned, in which these questions should be discussed ; and *you* are not likely to be competent judges of the real issue of such a discussion. Wait, then, till the time has come, and you are competent to judge.

But there are points on which, if you are thoughtful and sincere, you both can and must decide for yourselves : and among these are those which I have already named. You *can* judge whether or not the best men of every age have held the common creed and the common morality to which I have so often referred. You can and must judge whether or not the Bible, as compared with other books, even the best, is in some sufficient sense the Word of God. You can and must judge whether or not every page in it reveals God as the Father of all men, who is for ever seeking to save them from their sins and miseries, whether, therefore, He is worthy of your trust and love. And if, on due consideration, you answer these questions in the affirmative, your course is clear. There may still be much both in the Bible and in human life which you can neither explain nor understand ; but you know enough, and believe enough, to bind you to a life of virtue, of usefulness, of charity. In a word, you have a religion. You hold the vital substance of the Christian faith. And the most important question for you is not one that can be wrangled over in the schools, or even debated in your own heart. It is simply, Am I *true* to the truths I know, to the creed which I do believe, to the moral aim and ideal which I have placed before me ?

Be true to that, and I can promise you, not only that, by doing what you know of God's will, you shall come to know that Will more fully ; but also that, meanwhile, you shall find a tranquil and secure home for your spirit, let the fashion of this world, and of all worlds, pass away as it will.

## XXXI.

### *THE BOOK OF LIFE.*

“I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, to help these women, for they laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.”—PHILIPPIANS iv. 2, 3.

WHEN we consider our life, and especially when we review the past, we are impressed with a sense of its brevity, its losses, its failures. We are conscious that we have neither become what we intended to be, nor done what we meant to do. We are sadly aware that we have wasted energies which can never be recovered, and opportunities which will never recur. And our life hastens by with so swift a pace, and our utmost span covers a space so narrow, that we cannot hope to retrieve past failures in the time to come. Hence we fear that, when our life comes to be summed up, the result will be poor and worthless ; that we shall have left no mark on our age, that the world will be none the better for us, and that God will hardly welcome to the higher services of heaven stewards so unfaithful as we have been, servants so unprofitable.

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It is no marvel that *we* should sink into these dejected moods; for even the most distinguished servants of God, even such men as Moses and David and Paul, have looked back on their lives as sadly as we recall our own. But, with them, in proportion as they were men of God, the mood soon passed. From the brevity of time they took refuge in eternity. In loss they found a gain to match. Though *they* should die, they knew their work would live, and would bring forth fruit long after they had been called home. Nor has their hope made them ashamed. Not only are they now with God; they are still with us. Their works still follow them. *We* know them better than they were known to the men of their own day. Their influence for good has grown as years and centuries have passed away; and Moses, David, and Paul are absolutely doing a greater work in the world to-day than in any previous age. So long as the world lasts they will be at work in the world, and will exert an enlarging influence on the successive generations of men.

1. That is a great comfort for great men: but is it any comfort for us, who are not great?

With our slender gifts and scanty opportunities, we cannot hope to speak words which the world will never willingly let die, or to achieve works which will remain to speak for us when we are dead. So, at least, we often conclude—to our own hurt. Because we have but one talent, and that perhaps a small one, instead of being the more earnest to trade with it and make it more, we too often wrap it up in a napkin woven

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of our indolence and despair. Yet we need not, and should not, despair. However few and poor our gifts, if we use them wisely and assiduously, we may help to make some little corner of the world sweeter, and even to engrave our name on the memories of our neighbours. *We* all remember some who, when they were with us, were no more highly endowed than we are, though they were perhaps more devoted, or more steadfast in their devotion, to the service of God. We remember good women who by their patient, or even cheerful, endurance of great afflictions attested the power of the Christian life, and poor unlettered men who out of their poverty made many rich ; men and women who drew comfort for the sorrowful out of their own sorrows, and whose very ignorance did but make the truths they had learned shine the more brightly in comparison with the surrounding darkness. And if we remember them, why should not others remember us, if we resemble them ? It only needs that we acquire an equal constancy and devotion, to secure that our memory shall be cherished after we are dead, and that we should leave good works behind us, or the influence of a good example, for which at least a few of our neighbours will bless God for many a year to come.

Good works, indeed, can never die. If by your forbearance, your cheerful and ready kindness, your superiority to selfish aims, your unfaltering trust in the providential care and redeeming love of God, you help only one man to share your faith and follow your example, you have unsealed a fountain which will never

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cease to flow. Aquila and Priscilla were humble artizans and shopkeepers who, apparently, had no power of speech. Directly, by the use of their personal gifts, they could do little to serve the Church. But they were forward to do what they could. They gave Paul work when he came to Corinth ; they sat at his feet and learned of him : they comforted him with their sympathy and cordial affection. And at the synagogue one day, when Paul had left them, they heard a Jew of the most fervent spirit and eloquent tongue—heard him speaking of the mysteries of Christ with even less knowledge of them than they themselves possessed. Him (Apollos) they took home with them, and instructed in the way of God more perfectly. They could not speak by their own lips : but to what effect did they speak by the eloquent lips of Apollos ? They could not write epistles that should burn their way into the hearts of men ; but they helped Paul to write the noblest letters the world has ever read, letters which have changed and purged and raised the whole current of human thought. And, on the great day of account, Aquila and Priscilla will share the reward of Paul and Apollos : for they “received” prophets and righteous men ; and they will have the reward of prophets and righteous men.

In like manner, *we* may do good service and insure a great reward. Some little good we may all do by the immediate exercise of our own gifts such as they are : we can at least be patient and content, and cherish a kind and helpful spirit. And, like Aquila and Priscilla, we may also comfort and encourage those who have other,

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and if not higher, at least more public gifts than ours. If we cannot preach like Apollos, or write like Paul, we can at least shew a helpful sympathy with those who can preach and write better than we do ; and so we may share in the reward which the Gracious Judge will confer on them when they and we have gone home to take our wages.

2. Here, then, there is true comfort for the humble and diffident, for those who have, or conceive that they have, only a few poor gifts and opportunities to devote to the service of God and man. But there is a still greater comfort for them in the words before us.

In writing to his friends at Philippi, St. Paul mentions the names of some friends who held high position in the Church there, or were distinguished by large endowments. He names, for example, two women of distinction, Euodia and Syntyche. He also names Clement, the Clement, possibly, who afterward became bishop of Rome. But among his fellow-labourers in that city there were many more whom he does not name, either from lack of time or because they were undistinguished and little known. Yet these modest and lowly friends are not forgotten or passed by. Though the Apostle cannot stay, or does not care, to name them, he speaks of them with strong and tender affection as "*other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life,*" though they are not in this Epistle.

Now this brief allusion to the quiet humble men and women who had not made themselves a name in the Church is one that comes straight home to every lowly

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and to every generous heart. *We* are unknown, and likely to be unknown, both to the world and to the Church ; nevertheless we are known to God, and our works are written, with our names, in the book of his remembrance. And even the most distinguished servants of Christ must often feel that their way has been prepared for them, their work made possible, by the toils of those whose memory has now perished from the earth. How many whose names are irrecoverably lost must have been faithful unto death before England could have become a Christian land ! How many an obscure scholar must have toiled over the sacred page that the student of to-day might arrive at a truer sense of its meaning ! How many a knot of lowly men and women must have made many a sacrifice to rear a place of worship and gather a congregation into it, and to maintain and defend the right of free thought and worship, before any minister of to-day could freely proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, or any congregation could listen to him without loss or fear ! No man with a spark of generosity in him can forget what he owes to the silent patient labours of thousands who lived before him, or can fail to wish that they may one day have a large reward. And here St. Paul assures us that they *have* their reward, and that the reward is even more than commensurate with their deserts. Unknown on earth, their names are written in the book of life. Forgotten by man, they are remembered by God. Unhonoured here, unwept, unsung, they stand with angels, archangels, and all the holy company of heaven, round the eternal throne.

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3. How large their reward is we shall never know, unless we are so happy as to share it ; but a brief consideration of St. Paul's words may help us to some partial conception of it.

Whence did he derive this image of "the book of life" ; and what does it mean ? Its origin is obscure. The book, or—as the Greek has it—the *bible*, of life has been supposed to embody many different references to ancient custom. Thus, for instance, victorious athletes, who carried off prizes from the public games of Greece, had their names honourably inscribed in the archives of their native city ; and St. Paul *may* have meant that his fellow-labourers in the service of Christ, whose citizenship was in heaven, had victoriously wrestled with the powers of darkness, and, as a reward of their prowess, had had their names emblazoned on the heavenly rolls. In Persia, again, the names of men who had rendered a signal service to the throne were written in the royal chronicle, with some brief record of their exploits : Mordecai's service, for example, in saving the king's life, was recorded in the chronicle of Xerxes. And St. Paul *may* have meant to suggest that the King of heaven kept a book in which the secret services of his subjects were recorded, in order that, in due time, He might reward them openly. But the more likely derivation is from the use of this phrase in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the figurative language of the Old Testament "the book of life" is the register of the covenant people, of the true Israel. Those whose faith proved them to be sons of faithful Abraham were said to be "written unto

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life." Those who were unfaithful were said to be "blotted out of the book of the living," *i.e.*, they were self-excluded from the election and favour of God. During the Captivity, however, when the Jewish nation was divided and broken up, this phrase, "the book of life," came to have a higher sense: it came to mean the heavenly record of all who were destined to life and immortality. And throughout the New Testament it is employed in this higher sense. The Book of Life is the register of all the good, of all who in every nation have feared God and wrought righteousness, of all who have risen into life eternal by the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. St. Paul uses it in this sense, whatever other allusions may, to his mind, have been latent in it. What he means to say to the Philippians is at least this,—that his fellow-workers in the gospel, if unknown to earthly fame, were famous in heaven: undistinguished in the Church, or unrewarded by the world, God has rewarded them with life everlasting.

Already, then, we get some glimpse of the exceeding greatness of their reward. For, surely, even the most gifted and eminent of those who profess and call themselves Christians, if the alternative were placed before them, "Will you have fame on earth or be illustrious in heaven? Will you live on the lips of men or enter into life eternal?" would gladly sacrifice the noisy transient praises of men for eternal life in the love and favour of God. And this, eternal life and heavenly fame, is the reward of the poorest and humblest of those who believe in Christ and devote themselves to his service.

4. But the Lord Jesus helps us to an even truer estimate of this great reward. When He was in the flesh He chose seventy of the most capable and eminent of his disciples, and sent them out, two and two, before his face, to proclaim the glad tidings of great joy. They could preach as few have preached since them. They could work miracles, and did work them, even to the casting out of evil spirits. They returned to Christ elated with the success of their ministry, rejoicing above all in the extraordinary powers He had conferred upon them.

Had not they the very distinction for which you sometimes sigh? When you look back, do you not wish that instead of having had to fill a lowly place and to use common gifts, you could have been eloquent advocates of the truths you believe, or that you could have won honour by dedicating eminent gifts and great opportunities to the service of God and man? If you do, learn the very lesson you most need to learn from the lips of Christ. For when the Seventy came back to Him, exulting that even the spirits which win men to their harm were subject unto them, He bade them, "*Rejoice, rather, that your names are written in heaven.*" Better than splendid gifts, or world-wide fame, to have your names inscribed in the book of life. And this honour and reward is assured to all who work for Christ, however low their estate or small their means.

5. Indeed, as we are reminded by the Verses before us, distinction, even in the Church, may be won in ways much more likely to blot our names from the book of

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life than to fix them there. St. Paul speaks of Euodia and Syntyche, two women of influence and distinction in the Church at Philippi, two women eminent in virtue either of their spiritual gifts or high social standing. And what do we know of them? We know only that they quarrelled fiercely, that by their rivalry they caused strife and division in a church otherwise at peace, and so added a new burden to the burdened heart of the Apostle. These two women are named by Paul; we know their names, and that they quarrelled. Their name, and the fame of their quarrel, will endure to the end of the world. But is *that* quite the sort of distinction you would covet? If it lay at your choice, would you rather be named by the Apostle as these contentious women are named, or would you rather be among those unnamed friends whom he mentions with such tender grace as "other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life," though I do not write them here?

6. Mark another point. In this same Verse St. Paul speaks, with a sudden and fervent rush of love, of one so eminent and distinguished at that day that he did not need to be named, because everybody would know who was meant. With the tender music of tried and constant affection he says, "I beseech thee, *O true yoke-fellow*, help these women to be of the same mind in the Lord, since they once helped me in my work." St. Paul had many fellow-workers in the gospel; but the friend whom he here invokes is his only "yokefellow": he never bestows that title on any one else. And in the title itself there is proof of the tenderest attach-

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ment, of the closest association in labour. This friend was harnessed under the same yoke with the Apostle, tugged at the same burden, plowed in the same field ; and he had ever found him “true” or faithful. “True yokefellow” ! music and pathos are in the very words. There was no need to name one of whom Paul could speak in such tones as these. He must have been as well known in that age as the Apostle himself. But can any of you tell me who he was ? None of the critics and commentators know. Epaphroditus, Barnabas, Luke, Silas, Timothy, Clement, the Philippian pastor,— all these and many more have their advocates ; while a very ancient interpreter, moved I suppose by the *conjugal* tenderness of the Apostle’s tone, maintains that this “true yokefellow” was none other than St. Paul’s wife, although the common and approved belief of the Church is that St. Paul was never married.

Here, then, is a curious prank for human fame to play. The names of the two women, Euodia and Syntyche, of whom we should never have heard save for their quarrel, are in our mouths to this day ; but this “true yokefellow,” St. Paul’s closest associate and friend, is so utterly unknown to us that it is impossible to recover his name ! Distinction, as I said, may be won by unworthy means, by means so unworthy as the indulgence of a jealous and contentious spirit ; while the very name of the noblest and best of men may perish.

Why, then, should we crave a good so uncertain and capricious ? Let us, rather, be content to live *in our works* instead of our names ; let our only care for our

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names be to have them written in the book of life, not flung from mouth to mouth.

7. St. John calls this book of life "*the Lamb's book of life.*"<sup>1</sup> Now a lamb writing a book is, it must be admitted, a somewhat incongruous image ; and probably St. John knew that as well as we do. But he cared more for fulness of thought than for beauty of expression. And in this case the thought is so full that we may well accept his strange figure gratefully. For "*the Lamb*," or "*the Lamb of God*," was St. John's favourite designation for the Saviour of mankind. It expressed just those tender, meek, sinless, and self-sacrificing aspects of our Lord's character by which the Apostle of Love was most deeply impressed. And that "*the book of life*" should be "*the Lamb's book*" is a fact, or a figure, full of encouragement for humble labourers in Christ's service, whose names, though written in heaven, are unknown on earth. For the meek Lamb, shall He not remember the meek ? He who humbled Himself to manhood, to death, to the cross, shall not He honour the humble ? He who did not strive nor cry, nor make a noise in the streets, He who was dumb before the shearers and opened not his mouth when He was most oppressed, shall not He love and bless those who endure wrong patiently, and who labour on quietly and steadfastly at lowly tasks, although their labour wins no recognition or reward ? O diffident and self-distrustful servants of Christ, who take the slights of time with meekness, who win no honour and look for no honour

<sup>1</sup> Revelation xx. 12 ; xxi. 27.

whether from the world or the Church, who are content to be unseen of men and even account yourselves unworthy of notice or reward, your names are written in heaven, your reward is with your God !

8. There be last who shall be first. Think, brethren, how immense is Christ's power of putting honour on men, and how commonly it was used in behalf of those who were last in the world's esteem. Remember the Gospel stories. Remember how Jesus came, not to the rich and noble and gifted, but to the poor and lowly and despised ; not even to the righteous, but to sinners who were soon to sin no more. Nicodemus the ruler has to seek Christ out ; but Christ Himself seeks out the poor fishermen mending their nets. Dumb to the high-priest, grace is on his lips when He speaks to the people altogether born in sin. A poor heathen begs a boon of Him ; and to this day we honour the Syrophenician woman who was content to gather crumbs, with the dogs, from under his table. A despised but honest publican climbs a tree to see Him pass, and Christ espies him among the broad sycamore leaves, and holds him up to us as an example of fidelity under the most hostile conditions. A poor sinner from the streets breaks a box of ointment over his feet, and wherever his gospel is preached, this that she did is kept in remembrance. A poor widow casts two mites into the Treasury, and, with them, "her whole living" ; and forthwith she becomes a perpetual type of munificence and devotion to all the world.

It is *his* book of life in which your names are written.

And his eye is as keen as of old to detect the faithful, loving, obedient heart, and to see more in the farthing of penury than in all the shekels of wealth. Under all the disguises of mean and narrow conditions, of imperfect conceptions of truth and duty, He will recognize the loyal and devoted heart. And, indeed, if your hearts are true to Him, if you are set on doing your best for Him, though the very Church should put you last, He will rank you among the first ; though your names be unknown on earth, they will be known in heaven : though the world be ignorant of you and the Church acknowledge you not, He will confess you before the Father and his holy angels.

Blessed, then, are they, yea, and thrice blessed, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

## XXXII.

### *A FUTURE AND A HOPE.*

#### *A PRE-SACRAMENTAL HOMILY.*

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”—JEREMIAH xxix. 11.

IF you look at the final clause of this Verse, whether in the Old or the New Version, you will see that it has given our translators a good deal of trouble, and that in neither case are they satisfied with the result of their labours. In the Authorized Version the clause is rendered, “to give you *an expected end* ;” but that the translators of A.D. 1611 were not content with their rendering, or were not sure of it, is evident from the fact that, in the Margin, they offer the alternative reading, “to give you *an end and an expectation*.” In the Revised Version it is rendered in the Text, “to give you *hope in your latter end* ;” but neither are the translators of A.D. 1885 content with their work: for, in their Margin, they suggest that we should read, “to give you *a latter end and a hope*.” And yet the Original hardly seems so difficult or obscure as to account for this

uncertain handling. It certainly points to two gifts of God rather than one, though these gifts are closely related to each other; and it defines these two gifts, if we take the Hebrew quite literally, as "a something *after*," *i.e.*, after the present *time*, and "a something *to look for*," *i.e.*, a *better* time to come. If, then, we translate the Verse as promising the captive Israelites "*a future and a hope*," we get a fairly simple and accurate rendering of the words, and a rendering which at once brings home to our minds the very thought which the sacred writer intended to convey. The only objection to this rendering which I can conceive is its modern tone; for to speak of giving a man or a people *a future* would hardly have been possible a century ago: but that surely cannot be regarded as a conclusive objection to a rendering meant for modern readers.

Without spending more words upon it, then, let us accept this translation of God's gracious promise to Israel, and mark how the context at once sustains and illustrates it.

The *élite* of the Jewish people had been carried away captive to Babylon,—its princes and nobles, judges and teachers, prophets and priests; its artists and poets, its farmers and handicraftsmen. But though they had provoked, and knew they had provoked, this judgment by their sins, they held stoutly to the conviction that they were the elect people of God, and that therefore it was impossible for Him to be angry with them for long, however gross or fatal their sins. Their greatest prophets had foretold, indeed, that the Captivity would

extend over seventy years: but the prediction was so humbling to their pride, so repugnant to all the assumptions and prejudices they cherished, as to be altogether incredible to them—at least during the earlier years of their bondage and exile. Restless and excited by the hope of a speedy deliverance, they were unable to settle down in the land in which they sojourned, to identify themselves with its interests, or even to build themselves houses, and to engage in a traffic with the opulent and luxurious Babylonians by which they were sure to be enriched. Instead of acquiring and tilling land, or buying and selling in the markets and bazaars, they were hoarding up their scanty means, and dreaming of a miracle of mercy which should break their bonds in sunder and start them on their return to the land of their fathers. Cherishing these baseless dreams with an obstinate and passionate fondness, they soon found in their midst prophets who met and fed their cravings with false hopes, or who mistook an impulse from the cravings they shared with their brethren for an inspiration from God, and honestly but mistakenly flattered an expectation which was contrary to his declared will.

To save them from embittering the miseries of their captivity by cherishing these fond illusions and ungrounded hopes, the prophet Jeremiah, who still lingered amid the ruins of Jerusalem, sent them a Letter which is the nearest analogue to be found in the Old Testament to the Epistles which form so large a part of the New; a Letter, indeed, which presents some remarkable points both of comparison and of contrast to St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians (Jeremiah xxix. 1-3).

The Prophet had long been a teacher in Israel ; and now that he is absent from the men he had often taught, and taught in vain, he still loves them with an Apostolic fervour and counsels them with an Apostolic sagacity. In the name of Jehovah he tells them that they are *not* to expect a speedy deliverance, that the prophets who flattered them with that false hope were not “sent by the Lord ;” that many years must elapse before the trumpet of God would sound the summons for their return to the land and city they loved. Hence he bids them settle and establish themselves where they are, to build houses, plant gardens, marry and give in marriage ; and to seek their welfare and peace in the peace and well-being of the city in which they were detained. In short, with that sage good sense which underlies all the prophetic counsels, however ideal and poetic the form into which they were thrown, he bids them adjust themselves to their new position and make the best of it, instead of beating against the bars of their cage, and fretting out their hearts with a restlessness bred by visionary hopes, and by illusions which might stir them to mutiny and rage, but were sure to disappoint them and to leave them more deject and wretched (Verses 4-9).

And yet, on the other hand, they were not to abandon all hope, nor to resign themselves to despair, nor so to entangle themselves with the Babylonian world as not to be able to detach themselves from it when the signal came. God’s purpose to redeem them stood fast. The promise must tarry till its appointed time, but the time

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would come. They were not to conclude that their national history had run to its close, though as the years of Captivity dragged their slow length along they might often be tempted to think that it had. There was still *a future* before them, and a glorious future bright with *hope*. God would neither forget them, nor forget to be gracious to them. Not only would He turn again their captivity and restore them to their native land ; but their end should be better than their beginning. A spiritual renewal should accompany the national restoration, the political enfranchisement. The people, who had never yet been true to Jehovah, should once for all be weaned from their idolatrous leanings, and be *made* true to Him. They should seek for Him with all their hearts, and therefore find Him. They should call on Him, and He would hear ; pray, and He would answer them (Verses 10-14).

These were the facts and conditions which gave force and pathos to the benign promise: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord ; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." And, with these facts in mind, you can easily see how welcome the promise would be to the men of Israel as they sat enthralled by the waters of Babylon, as they wept over the bitter conditions of their lot and the still bitterer forebodings of their hearts.

That promise is to *us*, my brethren, as well as to them ; for it describes the attitude and purpose of God to sinful men, who are reaping the reward of their iniquities, all the world over and through all the ages

of time. When men are lost, though they are lost simply by breaking the barriers with which He has fenced them in, by disobeying his law and notwithstanding his grace, He does not forget them, does not turn against them or give them up. He neither ceases to love them, nor to labour for their recovery. On the contrary, the divinest Expositor of his ways has taught us that no sooner are they lost than they take a special dearness in his thoughts, excite a special solicitude, such as a shepherd feels for the silly sheep which has wandered from the fold. He begins to seek for them, and to seek that He may save. He may, and often must, leave them to endure the punitive results of their sins, and that through long spaces of time. And, in their misery, they may conclude that He has abandoned them, that forgiveness is impossible, recovery impossible; that his thoughts concerning them are thoughts of evil, and not of peace; that they have placed themselves beyond the pale of salvation, beyond the reach of hope.

How inveterate this tendency is—the tendency to assume that what is not done at once will never be done at all; how apt we are to conclude that the inevitable results of iniquity denote an inappeasable anger, rather than the Love which is seeking to lead us, by chastisement and correction, into a new, larger, and better life, we may infer from the fact that many of the best men among us, men of whose character and acceptance with God no one but themselves ever entertains a doubt, are never sure that they are at peace with Him, but are tempted to doubt of themselves, if not to

despair, to the very end ; to reckon themselves the chief of sinners, and to hold it possible that their names may be blotted from the book of life. Nay, of all those of you who will this day come to the Table of the Lord, I suppose there is hardly one who can say with the composure of an assured faith : " Though there is still much in me which is weak and sinful, I do not and cannot doubt that God has given me the eternal life which He revealed in his Son, and that He will never suffer me to fall away from that life :" and were any one forward to say that, he probably would have the profoundest cause for the doubts he did not feel. Assuredly there is not one of us to whom it would not be an ineffable comfort to hear the Divine Voice saying, " I know the thoughts I think toward *you*, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future, and a future all bright with hope."

And yet why should we doubt ? We do not doubt the permanence of other forms and modes of life : when once we have attained them, we hold them as a sure and constant possession. If we have attained to the intellectual life in any of its manifold forms ; if we take delight in literature, or in any branch of scientific knowledge and research, in music, in painting, in poetry, in the lavish yet exquisite beauty of the natural world, we do not suffer this delight to be for ever fretted and marred by the fear lest we should lose it. On the contrary, we cherish the assurance that it will grow by what it feeds upon, that it will gain in depth, in intensity, in delicacy, to the very end. Even in the common ethical life there are very few of us, I imagine, who are

constantly harassed and depressed by the fear that we shall one day lose it, and sink into thieves, drunkards, swindlers, violators of the public law and the public peace, and come to a shameful end. Why, then, should we for ever fret ourselves with the fear that we may fall away from the life of the spirit, the life of communion and fellowship with God, the life of truth and righteousness and charity ; and so fall from it as to leave no possibility of recovery, as to have no future before us or a future without hope ? If there is one thing of which we ought to be sure, it is the love of God, the inalienable grace of Him who is the Friend of the friendless, the Saviour of the lost, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

In how many and in what convincing forms has He taught us that, even when we are most evil, his thoughts toward us are not thoughts of evil, but thoughts of peace ! Was the world ever wickeder than when He sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that through Him the world might be saved ? Was the Church ever more hard and selfish and exclusive than when He sent his Son to throw open the gates of the Church to all mankind ? Did not Christ come to take away our sins, to bring us near to our Father, to confer on us the power of an endless life, and so to pour the light of a great future and a great hope into our darkened and foreboding hearts ?

These, indeed, are the days and years of our Captivity. The time, the set time, for our complete redemption has not come, and may still seem very far off.

We are still in some measure under the power, or exposed to the power, of evil, even though Sin no longer has dominion over us. A long pilgrimage, through an unknown waste, still lies between us and the true city and home of the soul ; and it may be years before we are summoned to set out upon that final journey. But why should we weep like those who have no sustaining hope as we sit by the waters of *our* Babylon, when, in the very character of God and in the mission of his Son we have the promise, the assurance, the proof, that God means well by us, that He will yet visit us and perform his good word to us, bringing us to the land which has no need of sun or moon because He Himself is the luminary thereof ? If He sought us out when we were still far from Him and alienated from Him, will He not much more save us from all sin and imperfection now that we love Him and are trying to walk with Him in the way everlasting, the way of righteousness and peace ?

We know not what we shall be when his gracious promise and intention for us is fulfilled : *i.e.*, we do not fully know, but we do know in part. And the words of Jeremiah put us on the right track ; they teach us what we most want to know of the future and of the hope which lies before us. That which made the future of the captive Hebrews so bright in the Prophet's thought was the conviction that, when their hope sprang into fruition, they would (Verses 12, 13) seek the Lord with all their hearts, and live in so happy a communion with Him that whenever He spoke, they would hear ; and whenever

they called on Him, He would answer. And is not that in the main our hope too? Happier outward conditions will and must be ours when our wills are wholly one with the Will that rules the universe. But it is not these happier outward conditions which most attract us, if we have the mind of Christ; for He left all the splendour and glory of heaven for the penury and strife of earth in order that He might do the will of his Father, and cause that will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven. No, the hope which most of all kindles and fortifies the soul is this,—that we shall be like Him, that we shall be of one will and one heart with the Father, that we shall be righteous and perfect even as He is perfect. Again and again St. Paul sums up the final effect of the whole saving and reconciling work of Christ in such words as these: “You hath he reconciled unto God, that he may present you *holy, blameless, unrepentable* before him.” In other words, when the redemption of Christ has taken its full effect upon us, we shall be men in whom even the pure eyes of God will find no fault, no spot. And if that is what Christ came to do for us, what He *will* do for us, has He not in very deed given us a future and a hope—a great future, and the very hope we most crave and cherish even when it seems most beyond our reach?

Take to yourselves, then, the full comfort of these musical Divine words as you come to the Table of the Lord: “I know the thoughts I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope;” and, as you dwell upon them, let love cast out fear.

### XXXIII.

#### *THE SECRET OF TRUE GREATNESS.*

“It is better, if the will of God should be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God ; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit.”  
—*1 Peter iii. 17, 18.*

IT is a curious but indubitable and significant fact that, whenever a man of any culture and refinement speaks of the elements of personal or national greatness, and singles out for admiration the men who have done most for their country or the race, he selects and tries them by a very different standard from that by which we commonly measure and estimate the men of our own day. Indeed, even we ourselves, when we are dealing with a past age and considering who are the men that contributed to its greatness, select for special honour a very different kind of person from the living men whom we have been most eager to see, most forward to admire. If we were to be introduced to a millionaire to-morrow, most of us, I suppose, could hardly help throwing a little extra deference into our manner to him, simply because he was so very rich. If it were announced that a duke was

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to take the chair at a public meeting, and to make a speech, the hall would, probably, be at least as crowded as it would be to hear the most learned scholar or the profoundest sage of the time, although the duke in question might have no reputation whether for wisdom, or learning, or goodness. And if a royal prince were about to visit any of our boroughs, no doubt the town would be thronged, and would pour itself out through all its streets to gaze upon him and welcome him, without much reference either to his intellectual standing or his moral character. But the very moment we study a past epoch, the very moment, *i.e.*, that we are neither blinded by our interests or prejudices, nor dazzled by merely outward shows, we think no more of millionaires, or dukes, or princes, as such ; we now delight to honour only the men who have uttered great thoughts, wrought great deeds, lived great lives : and these are often men who made no great noise in their own day, who possessed little wealth, held no high rank, and were unknown to the noisy multitude whose breath is fame, and whose fame but a breath.

Two classes all men select for reverence, and rank among the great—at least when their day is past. First, those who, possessed of large natural gifts, cultivated them wisely and devoted them to the public good ; statesmen who, in hours of peril and excitement, were true to their own convictions, and to the best interests of their country, to the neglect of their own interests, reputation, success ; soldiers who bled and died, or who fought and conquered, in the cause of order or freedom ; poets, artists, men of letters, and men of science, who have

taught us to read the secrets of nature, or have given noble expression to noble and inspiring thoughts. Take up what history we will, and we invariably find these men placed in the front rank, whether they were poor or rich, of high birth or low. And the strange, the beautiful thing is—for it shews how true the moral judgment of the world is after all, and how much latent nobility glows in every heart—that in proportion as these men have *suffered* in and for their endeavours to enlighten or benefit the world, the world has taken them to its very heart, and they have assumed heroic proportions in the eyes of all subsequent generations.

But it would be hard if only men of singular and extraordinary gifts were accounted great ; for these gifts, because singular and exceptional, cannot be within the reach of many. The natural dowry, the culture, the opportunities, which go to make the great statesman, or soldier, or poet, are necessarily denied to most of us. But are we, therefore, denied all possibility of greatness ? By no means. For among those whom all men pronounce great are those who have been able to frame for themselves an heroic conception of duty, and to live by it. Any good historian, any competent judge, would affirm that that nation was to be accounted great which was capable of an heroic self-devotion, which had men and women who could dare and endure all things for a noble cause : as, for example, the Dutch when they cut their dams and flooded field and homestead rather than yield to the cruel tyranny of Spain ; or the Swiss when, to defend their liberty, they braved a continent in arms ;

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or the English when they bearded the conqueror of Europe, or died silently at their posts during the Indian Mutiny rather than desert their duty. It is a sure sign and proof of greatness when a race produces women of gentle nurture and breeding, who master all their instincts, and resign all the comforts and refinements of life, that they may tend the sick and wounded, and teach the outcast ; or men, like the brave common soldiers on board the *Birkenhead*, who stood quietly in their ranks till the sea closed over them, that the women and children might be saved ; such men as Joseph Sieg, the American engine-driver, who risked and encountered death by fire that he might rescue the passengers in his train from a death like his own ; such women as Grace Darling, the heroine of the lifeboat, or Bella Brown, the no less heroic fisherman's daughter, who, on a bitter winter night, with a cruel fog obscuring every step of her path, ran five miles along the coast, often wading through the cold rough waves, to fetch the rocket apparatus by which the crew of a Swedish steamer were saved from the wreck.

And in *this* class, as in the former, we can hardly fail to observe that those whom the world loves best, and honours most, are still those who have *endured* most and most bravely, those who have suffered most for the sake of others, who have been animated by the most generous and disinterested spirit. Go into any company, and tell such stories as those to which I have adverted, and all sorts and conditions of men are moved to tears of love and admiration. The very drunkards in their cups, who have lost all power of self-denial, will be

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touched, will be forward and loud in their praise ; and even the most polished and selfish of men, even the most luxurious and self-indulgent of women, will feel the moisture rising in their eyes, the sob in their throats. And what is it that they admire ? What is it that touches and moves them till they grow ashamed of their own useless and self-pleasing lives ? It is the courage that dares and endures ; it is the love which conquers selfishness, and is ready to fling away life itself if only others can thus be served or saved.

This then, as all the world admits, is the true greatness, the true heroism. And I confess I should like to know, if any man can tell me, why, when the man Christ Jesus does a deed of this very kind—the kind which all men admit to be most noble and heroic, a deed which differs from that of other men only in being incomparably more noble, more unselfish, more heroic ; I should like to know, I say, why the world does not admire *Him* and take *Him* to its heart ? The whole race was lying in darkness and in misery when He came among us, as those will most freely admit who best know what that time was like ; no one but He cared to save it or could have saved it ; no one but He could have poured light into the darkness of its misery and despair, or have redeemed it from the awful sins and punishments of sin in which it lay helpless and bound. And He *suffered* for us ; suffered an agony which we cannot so much as conceive, a passion of which the Cross is a pathetic but utterly inadequate symbol, that He might bring us back to life and freedom, health and peace. If, then, we love and admire all who suffer

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in well-doing, all who risk life, and loss, and pain, that they may succour and save their fellows, shall we not love and adore Him who laid down his life for us all? If all these are great, what is He? What, but the greatest of all? If the world knew nothing more of Him than this, that He suffered for us all, is not the world bound, on its own shewing and according to its own standard of greatness, to reverence Him as at least the best and fairest of the sons of men? If to suffer in order to save be the supreme title to honour, and will lift a common soldier or a fisherman's daughter to the highest pinnacle of human glory, may we not reasonably claim that the name of Christ should be placed high above every other name? If we knew nothing more of Him than that He loved us and gave Himself up for us, nothing more than that He died to give us life, are we not bound to love Him, and to devote our life to his service?

2. This passage, then, contains and enforces the secret of true greatness when it bids us carry well-doing to the suffering point. But it has other lessons for us as well as this.

When St. Peter implies that to suffer in, or for, well-doing is honourable ; when, moreover, he implies that the most honourable form of suffering is that which mortifies the flesh but quickens the spirit, he does but echo the common verdict of the world. For, as we have seen, the world, with one voice, singles out as its best men, the men it loves and honours most, those who have suffered nobly in some worthy cause ; who have not

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repined at the loss of all things, but have rejoiced rather that they were counted worthy to suffer for it. And the kind of suffering it holds in profoundest respect is not that which can endure much in order to reach some outward good, but that which can endure all things in order to gain some large ethical or spiritual end. To suffer for the sake of personal gain is not to shew a great spirit ; to toil and suffer even to win wealth or renown for our country is not to reach the highest form of greatness. But to mortify the flesh with its cravings and lusts, to suffer in all that is merely sensual, personal, selfish, that we may live more truly and more nobly in the intellectual and moral regions of our nature ; to suffer for the advancement of knowledge, or for our country's best interests, or at the bidding of religious conviction—this is to shew the true greatness, greatness of the finest quality, in the highest degree.

But if that be so, and all the world affirms it to be so, have we not here a most welcome side-light thrown on that great mystery, the function and purpose of evil ? It is admitted that men become great only as they prove themselves to be unselfish, generous, capable of living for other and nobler ends than their personal interest and gratification. It is also admitted that the truest and dearest greatness is attained only by those who have suffered, or have shewn themselves willing to suffer, for some generous conviction, principle, cause, at the prompting of a pure and disinterested passion or emotion. But how should we suffer in and for well-doing if there were no evil in and around us ? While we are doing

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good, it cannot be good, it can only be evil that bars our way, and brandishes its arms against us, and gives, if it also receives, many wounds. In the last resort, all our miseries, all our sufferings, spring from sin. The invincible ignorance, the obstinate prejudices, the persistent selfishness of our fellows, their enmity to the truth which cuts their prejudices against the grain, and to the righteousness which rebukes their vices or imposes a check on their passions—all these come of evil. It is from these that men suffer when bent on doing well: it is by these that they are hindered, thwarted, and at times driven back in apparent defeat. So that, after all, it would seem that to creatures such as we are, in such a world as this, what we call “evil” is necessary to our education and discipline in goodness, to our culture in impersonal and unselfish habits and aims; to the development, in fine, of the very elements and qualities in our nature which are universally confessed to be the noblest and the best.

If, then, it is both a useful and a beautiful thing to suffer for well-doing, if it breeds and cultivates in us a spirit truly great, we may well endure evil patiently.

3. Again, this line of thought yields a glimpse into the mystery of the Incarnation. Any man, any theist at least, will acknowledge it to be of the first importance that we should come to know and love God. But we cannot find Him out to perfection, whether by the searching inquest of reason, or by the more vital and gracious intuitions of the heart. If we are to know Him as we need to know Him, He must reveal Himself to us. And how is the Inhabitant of Eternity to reveal Himself to

the frail children of time? Obviously He cannot speak to us in his own language; for as eye cannot see, so neither can ear hear Him. If we are to take his meaning and grasp his words, He must limit Himself, He must empty Himself of his glory and condescend to our infirmities. He must speak to us in *our* language, since we cannot understand his.

But obviously, too, He must use our noblest language, that which most intimately appeals to our conscience and heart, that which can be apprehended by all the kindreds of this divided earth.

Our noblest language, that which all can apprehend and admire, which touches and moves all races and all classes with a common emotion, to a common enthusiasm, is, as we have seen, the language of noble deeds, of a noble life, the language of that heroic greatness which is content to suffer for doing well, and able to draw from its sufferings new life and vigour for the spirit.

This, then, *this* is the language which God must deign to use if He would in very deed reveal Himself to us, if He would speak so that we may understand Him, so that our hearts may be most profoundly stirred; for this is the one language which all men comprehend, and to which they respond with an instant admiration and love. And this, as we all know, *is* the language in which the gospel of Christ is written. Christ suffered for us both that He might bring God to us, and that He might bring us to God; that He might shew us what God is like, and so kindle in us a love which would make us like God.

But if Christ Himself were nothing more than man He

could but teach us, in the supreme degree, what is in man, not what is in God. He could but have shewn, in finer quality and fuller measure, what the men and women whom all the world calls great have shewn us, and are shewing us to this day. We crave, we need, more than that. It is our prime and deepest necessity to know God, to hear Him speak of and for Himself, to have Him shew Himself unto us. He *has* spoken, He *has* shewn Himself to us, if only we believe that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. In and through Christ He has not only spoken to us, but spoken in the noblest language of earth and time, the language of an heroic life, in a clear and great spirit, who lived and died for our instruction, for our salvation, and who suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that we might know and love our Father, and come back to Him.

4. Finally, this line of thought supplies us with a noble incentive to a noble life. One kind of greatness is, as I have said, beyond our reach. No man by taking thought, by any effort of the will, however energetic and sustained, can *make* himself a great statesman, a great poet, or even a great theologian. We must accept our natural capacities and gifts, whatever they may be, though, unquestionably, we might make far more of them than we commonly do were we diligent in cultivating them, and wise to use them for large and noble ends. But the highest kind of greatness, that which most deeply moves the hearts of men, is open to us all. What a boatman's or a fisherman's daughter can do, we could do if we were bent on it. The spirit that turns a common

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soldier or sailor or engine-driver into a hero, and keeps his memory green long after a so-called "famous" man is forgotten, can hardly be beyond our reach. They, indeed, did not attain greatness by seeking a reputation for it ; nor shall we. They won, or rather they shewed, greatness by a simple but entire devotion to common duties, by doing well, though they had to suffer for it. And well-doing is not a *close* profession ; it is open to us, and to all men.

Nay, not only is the path of well-doing open to us, it is one which we are bound to take if we are followers of Christ. When St. Peter said, "It is better," *i.e.*, it is more honourable, it is fairer and nobler, "to suffer in well-doing than in evil-doing," and urged his readers to be "followers of that which is good," he was speaking to perfectly commonplace persons—such as we are—to men who had won no distinction, who possessed no exceptional gifts ; and yet he was exhorting them to be great ; for, as we have seen, to carry duty to the point of suffering for it, to carry goodness to the pitch of self-sacrifice, is the true secret of human greatness. And when he reminds us that the suffering which attends well-doing is of the kind that mortifies the flesh, but puts new life into the spirit, he gives us just the practical hint we require that we may know how to set about following that which is good. For he teaches us that we may be quite sure we have the Christian aim, the great heroic aim, before us when we occupy ourselves with duties in the discharge of which we are compelled to deny and crucify that baser self which is for ever seeking its own

gain or its own gratification ; when our greed is checked, or our vanity, or our self-will, or our self-indulgence ; and when at the same time our intelligence, our fair-mindedness, our courage, our charity are being trained and developed. And, last of all, when the holy Apostle sets before us the example of Christ, and stimulates us to a self-effacing devotion to duty and conviction by reminding us how *He* once suffered for our sins that *He* might bring us to God, then surely he supplies us with the keenest, the most pathetic and constraining, of all motives, of all incentives, to a great and noble life. For we cannot be followers of Christ *and not follow Him* ; nor can we follow Him save as we take the way of the Cross.

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